



Summit County Public Health

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Dear Parent:

This is the season for respiratory illnesses, including **colds**, **influenza**, and **pertussis** (whooping cough), and **pneumonia**. Respiratory illnesses can be caused by different germs, most commonly bacteria and viruses.

There are simple ways that these respiratory illnesses can be prevented. It is important to teach your children the importance of good health manners!

TIPS OF RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE

- ✓ Wash hands frequently; may use hand sanitizer gels if soap & water is not available.
- ✓ Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth. Unwashed hands carry lots of germs!
- ✓ Cough or sneeze into a disposable tissue and throw away promptly.
- ✓ When a tissue is not available, turn head and cough or sneeze into shoulder or elbow
- ✓ Clean shared surfaces (door knobs, telephones, etc.) frequently

Influenza is an acute viral illness that can be very serious in the very young, the elderly and in those with certain medical conditions. Influenza starts suddenly with fever, headache, sore throat, cough, body aches. It can last up to 10 days. Children often have milder symptoms than adults but they can pass the virus on to others. While there is no vaccine for the common cold, there is a vaccine for influenza, the “flu shot”. Annual flu vaccines for children aged 6 months and older is recommended. It is a great time for your family to get the flu vaccine.

Pertussis or whooping cough is a very infectious vaccine-preventable illness. It is caused by bacteria and is spread primarily when infected people cough or sneeze. The illness starts with cold-like symptoms, progressing to spasms of coughing, often with a “whoop” sound or vomiting after coughing spells. People of all ages can get pertussis. However, infants and other children with no or incomplete immunizations are most at risk for this illness and its serious complications, such as seizures and pneumonia. This is a good time to check your families’ vaccine records.

Pneumonia, an infection of the lungs, can be a complication of the common cold, pertussis and influenza. It can result in very mild to very severe illness.

It's also important to contact your child's doctor if cough and/or fever persist. Also, please keep your child's school or daycare informed of any illness and keep your son and/or daughter home until he/she is feeling better.