

Healthy Kids – Top 5 List

By Mandy Sturges, RN, LSN

Life is busy! If you have kids in school, you are running here, there and everywhere. Sometimes having a list can help you stay organized. Here is a short list to stick on the fridge; the top five things you can do to help keep your kids healthy this school year.

- 1. Encourage good hand washing.** Nothing beats good hand washing when it comes to preventing illness. Teach your kids to wash their hands for at least 20 seconds with warm, soapy water. Have them sing the Happy Birthday or ABC song twice while they wash to help make it more fun! Make sure they lather up their hands with soap, interlocking their fingers together as they wash. Encourage them to wash their hands before and after eating, after using the bathroom, after blowing their nose, and anytime their hands are visibly dirty. Hand sanitizers are a convenient option, but good old fashioned hand washing with soap and water is best.
- 2. Cough and sneeze etiquette.** Kids are actually really pretty good about this, but it is always good to remind them of how to properly cover their coughs and sneezes. Teach them to use their elbows to cover their cough or sneeze instead of their hands. This helps keep germs of hands, which can then be easily spread to others.
- 3. Encourage healthy sleep habits.** Being well rested is important for learning and for staying healthy. The CDC website recommends 9-10 hours of sleep for teenagers and at least 10 hours of sleep for school aged children. Establishing a good bedtime routine of going to bed at the same time each night is beneficial. Do your best to provide a quiet, dark, relaxing environment, free from all “gadgets”.
- 4. Breakfast anyone?** Children need fuel to get them through the day, and eating a healthy breakfast is essential! If your children eat at home before school, that is great. If the mornings are busy, remember that West and Park Elementary have free breakfast in the mornings. Even if your child does grab something quick in the morning for breakfast, be sure to remind them they are always welcome to come eat breakfast at school. Breakfast is also available at the Middle School and High School for a small cost.
- 5. Proper dress.** As the temperature drops over the next few months, please remember to send winter jackets and boots for your children, as well as hats and gloves. Having the proper attire will help to keep them safe during these Minnesota winters. Dressing in layers is always a good idea as temperatures can really fluctuate throughout the day. Be sure they have tennis shoes for physical education or gym class.

Thank you for letting us borrow your children during the school day. It is a pleasure to watch them grow and learn. I hope this list helps you to keep your kids healthy. If you have any other questions or concerns about how to keep your kids healthy this school year, please don't hesitate to call the District Nurse at 320-234-2629.