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Dear Parents/Guardians,

As you may know, influenza and other illnesses can be spread easily from person to person. Therefore, we are taking steps to prevent the spread of illness at Windsor Elementary, **but we need your help to accomplish this**. Illnesses like colds and flu are spread from person to person via respiratory droplets. These droplets are spread by coughing, sneezing or by touching objects or people with contaminated hands. We know that some viruses and bacteria can live two hours or longer on surfaces such as desks and doorknobs. Another illness that is common during the winter months is the “stomach bug” or gastroenteritis. Noroviruses are responsible for about half of all gastroenteritis outbreaks. Norovirus outbreaks occur throughout the year, but over 80% of them occur during November-April. Although viral illnesses can spread from person to person during normal daily activities, there are some simple things which help reduce the spread of illness.

1. Get a seasonal influenza vaccine each year to protect against seasonal flu and its potential complications. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that all children aged 6 months and older get a flu vaccine. The vaccine is widely available in our area. Physician offices, the local health department, and local pharmacies all administer influenza vaccinations.
2. Remind children to cover their mouth and nose when sneezing and coughing. If they can, they should use a tissue and then throw it away, washing their hands afterwards. If they don’t have a tissue handy, they should use their inner elbow or upper sleeve rather than their hands.
3. Encourage children to keep their hands away from their eyes, nose, and mouth.
4. Encourage frequent handwashing. Remind them to wash with soap and warm water. A recommendation to help them wash long enough is to have them sing the ABC’s silently to themselves while washing. When the song is finished then they have washed long enough.
5. Remind them to not share cups, water bottles, or eating utensils.
6. Children should stay home if they have a fever. The CDC considers a person to have a fever when he or she has a measured temperature of at least 100° F (37.8° C) or greater. If they have had a recent fever, they should not return to school until they have been fever free for 24 hours (without the help from Tylenol or Ibuprofen). This means that if they are sent home with an elevated temperature from school, they are asked to stay home on the following day. They should also stay home (with or without fever) if they have symptoms which are obvious of illness, i.e. recent vomiting, cough, congestion. Sometimes it is difficult to decide in the morning whether a child is well enough to attend school. Call the school if you are in doubt. You can also ask yourself, “Can my child go through the day with minimal disruption to himself and others?” By staying home when they are sick, children are helping themselves recuperate and are helping their peers stay healthy.
7. Clean and disinfect hard surfaces and objects that may be contaminated with germs frequently, including bathroom surfaces, kitchen counters and toys for children. Clean by wiping them down with a household disinfectant according to directions on the product label.

By working together, I believe we can reduce the spread of illness at Windsor Elementary.

Sincerely,

Kristin Hamilton RN, School Nurse