Flu Prevention -- You Can Make It Fun!

Here are fun ways to help your children learn good health practices during flu season:

**Rule:** Wash your hands often.

**Fun Way:** Variety! Have a basket of small soaps on hand, and let the kids take turns choosing which to use. Let them try liquid and solid soaps and different scents. Wash hands in different sinks and at different spots. (The spigot in the back yard is an amusing change from the bathroom sink.) Hand sanitizer is a treat to use at the mall or if traveling. Washing and rinsing in a big bowl of warm water is silly fun, too. A drop of food color added to the water? Even more fun!

**Rule:** Wash your hands for 20 seconds.

**Fun Way:** Choice! Many children know that singing “Happy Birthday” twice gives your hands a good cleaning. Now let them suggest other wash-along songs. Time the songs as they wash and see how close they come to 20 seconds. Or use the timer on the microwave and see who comes closest to guessing when 20 seconds is up.

**Rule:** Sneeze into your sleeve.

**Fun Way:** Make a game of it! First, teach your child how to make a fake sneeze. (That’s fun right there!) Then practice sneezing into your sleeve. Take turns and see who laughs first. Or try sneezing one sneeze, then two sneezes, and so on. See how many times you can sneeze in a row -- always into the crook of your elbow.

If you make it fun to practice good health, you’ll be amazed at how easily children remember these precautions. Good health truly can be fun!

**Prayer:** Thank you, God, for my wonderful family. Keep them well. Release my fears and build my trust in you, Lord. Guide us to health and happiness. Amen.

“What can I do about swine flu?”

Every year, seasonal flu begins in the fall and ends in the spring. But sometimes a brand new flu emerges. Since our bodies don’t recognize it, our immune defenses are weaker so it spreads more easily and quickly. That sort of flu is pandemic flu. H1N1 (swine flu) is such a virus.

Seasonal flu tends to most severely affect the very old, the very young, and the very sick. However, infants, pre-school children, young adults, and health care workers are especially vulnerable to H1N1.

For those most at risk, getting vaccinated is the first line of defense. Here are some additional healthful suggestions for you and your loved ones:

**While you are feeling well:**

- Wash your hands often and for 20 seconds. Instead of calling your family to dinner, announce, “Time to wash up before dinner.”
- Avoid close contact with sick people.
- Don’t share objects such as cups, bottles, and telephones. Disinfect them if others have used them.
- Plan what you’ll do if you or a loved one gets the flu.
- Have on hand a 2-week supply of water and food.

**If you or a loved one becomes ill:**

- Stay home -- from work, from worship, from school.
- Remain at home until 24 hours after a fever has ended.
- Get plenty of rest and fluids.
- Never give aspirin to a child or teenager; in rare cases, a serious complication may arise.

- advocatehealth.com
- pandemicflu.gov
- cdc.gov/flu
- redcross.org
- www.idph.state.il.us (vaccine schedules/locations)
- Check out flu.gov/psa/index.html#elmo to see Elmo from Sesame Street offer his flu prevention tips in a charming and memorable way.

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