



Grandparents Corner

January 2015

Keep the Flu Away!

What is Influenza?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat and lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent the flu is by having a flu vaccine each year.

People who have the flu often feel some or all of the signs below:

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (very tired)
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults.

Note: Not everyone with the flu will have a fever! Very important!

Influenza is dangerous to children, more so than the common cold. Each year, many children become sick with seasonal influenza; some of those illnesses result in death. Below are some facts about children and the flu:

- Children commonly need medical care because of the flu, especially before they turn five-years-old.
- Severe influenza complications are most common in children younger than two-years-old.
- Children with chronic health problems like asthma, diabetes, and disorders of the brain or nervous system are at especially high risk of developing serious flu complications.
- Each year, an average of 20,000 children under the age of five are hospitalized with complications due to the flu.
- Flu seasons vary in severity; however, some children die from flu each year. During the 2013-2014 influenza seasons, more than 100 flu-related pediatric deaths were reported.

Vaccination is the best way to protect against the flu. Everyone six months of age or older should have the flu vaccine as soon as it is available in your area.

Some everyday steps you can take to stop the spread of germs:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- Practice good health habits. Have plenty of sleep and exercise, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat healthy food.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- If you or your child are sick, stay home from work or school for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.

Sources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (www.cdc.gov) and www.flu.gov

Feeling cold may be normal when we age, but some people experience being cold all the time. Aside from aging, there are a few medical reasons that can make you feel unusually cold. Read the issue and answer True or False to the questions below.

1. Hypothermia is a condition characterized by a dangerously low body temperature. T F
2. One of the common changes people notice while they are aging is that they are less sensitive to cold temperatures. T F
3. Medications can lead to heat loss and hypothermia. T F
4. Low estrogen levels associated with menopause or low thyroid hormone levels are some examples of changes that commonly occur in women. T F
5. Signs of hypothermia include shivering, cold pale skin, slow breathing, slow pulse, weakness, drowsiness, confusion, and impaired judgment.
T F
6. For safety, keep the furnace filters clean. T F
7. A frail, older adult in a 60-degree house can develop mild hypothermia overnight. T F
8. Healthy older people never experience feeling cold. T F
9. Muscles can generate heat and warm you up, so it is important to try to build more muscle by doing some strength training exercises. T F
10. CO (carbon monoxide) poisoning can cause illness and even death.
T F

KEY: 1. T 2. F 3. T 4. T 5. T 6. T 7. T 8. F 9. T 10. T