



USEP-OHIO PARENT TIP: Winter Health Ideas

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Over the Thanksgiving holiday we were fortunate to have a family reunion at our home! We had people of all ages, gathered at three tables. Knowing that the chances of spreading germs, flu and cold viruses among us was almost certain, especially since several had taken crowded plane flights, we did a little research on winter health ideas. Preventing health problems may be hard to do. But we can arm our families to hold their own when exposed to bugs of all kinds during the winter/holiday season. These are tips we tried during the reunion.

- Wash your hands or use the alcohol-based cleansers like Purell® or Germ-X® to reduce the spread of disease. We placed a few of the large pump bottles in kitchen and bathrooms.
- Limit exposure to infected people. Jack, who is four, stayed in bed the day he felt ill.
- Practice healthy habits like washing kitchen cloths and towels daily and -
 - ✓ Eat a balanced diet. Vitamins and anti-oxidants found in vegetables and fruits help.
 - ✓ Get enough sleep. Adults 7-8 hours, teens 9-10, younger kids need 10-12 hours!
 - ✓ Cut out the stress. Too much stress impairs the immune system.
 - ✓ Drink lots of water, juice, soup and non-caffeinated, non-alcoholic beverages.

I put out healthy breakfast things the night before – cereals, bowls, oranges, bananas, so everyone could help themselves in the morning.

This relieved the stress and rush to fix breakfast.

Recently we have all read the headlines about MRSA! Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus. MRSA, is a frightening public health issue we need to know how to handle, but has been present, mostly in hospitals, since 2000. Some health experts feel that after an outbreak we may wish to briefly close a school or other facility to disinfect it, but then we can proceed as usual as long as we take some simple precautions.

MRSA travels by hand, towel, clothes, bedding and gym equipment, not by breathing or air. The Center for Disease Control recommends the following:

- ✓ Shower immediately after exercise. Always wash hands when you arrive at home.
- ✓ Avoid sharing towels or razors.
- ✓ Use a towel or clothing between skin and shared gym equipment.
- ✓ Ensure surfaces are cleaned regularly in public places you visit.

Carry wipes with you.

- ✓ Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered, watch for signs of infection like redness, warmth, swelling, pain or fever. Don't assume it is MRSA, but do check with a doctor.

- ✓ Day-care centers, gyms, and schools may consider installing hand cleanser dispensers.

Consult the following websites for more information.

Centers for Disease Control/Prevention:

www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa_ca_public.html.

Mayo Clinic: www.mayoclinic.com/health/mrsa/DS00735

Web MD: <http://www.webmd.com/news/20071024/mrsa-experts-answer-your-questions>

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