

Beating the bugs in school this winter



With children learning and playing in close proximity, primary schools can be a breeding ground for illnesses like colds, flu and the winter vomiting bug Norovirus, particularly during the run up to Christmas as children get tired and run down.

Here are some simple steps you can share with your pupils as well as with parents and carers, to help reduce the risks of them becoming poorly, and of spreading infection to others.

Good handwashing

Remind pupils to wash their hands regularly using soap and warm water, especially after using the toilet and before eating.

For handwashing to be really effective, rub your hands together until the soapy lather appears. Then take time to rub each palm over the back of the other hand, rub between the fingers on each hand, rub around each of your thumbs and rub your hands with the fingers together. Finally rinse and dry your hands with a clean towel or hand dryer.

If you're washing your hands properly, you'll have time to sing 'Happy Birthday' twice while doing it.

More advice about handwashing can be found on the Health for Kids website (www.healthforkids.co.uk/staying-healthy/washing-hands). You may like to share this short 'Soaper Heroes' film from University Hospitals of Leicester (<https://youtu.be/biWsSibdTIw>) with pupils, as it emphasises good handwashing as best protection from the spread of germs.

Coughs, colds and flu

Encourage children to use tissues rather than their hands to trap germs when they cough or sneeze. The used tissues need to be binned as quickly as possible as germs can live



on surfaces for 24 hours, sometimes longer. Children can find out more from the Health for Kids website (www.healthforkids.co.uk/staying-healthy/sneezing-coughs-and-colds).



Flu is a highly contagious viral infection that spreads through coughs and sneezes.

The nasal flu vaccine is a really important way for children to not only protect themselves from the flu, but also friends and family, including younger siblings. It's administered as a simple, painless nasal spray – no needles involved!

Parents are sent an information leaflet (available at

www.leicspart.nhs.uk/library/phe_protecting_child_flu_dl_leaflet.pdf) about the nasal flu

vaccination with the consent form. A child-friendly version of this information is available on the Health for Kids website

(www.healthforkids.co.uk/staying-healthy/stopping-flu), as well as a link to the Flu Heroes film (<https://youtu.be/1jHWwm8NQUw>).

Find out when the immunisations team will be visiting your school by visiting the Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust website

(www.leicspart.nhs.uk/library/2018FluProgrammeOnlineSchedule.pdf).

Norovirus sickness bug

Norovirus is often known as the 'winter vomiting bug' because there tend to be more cases during the winter months. Norovirus is highly contagious, so if pupils do come down with it, they should stay at home for 48 hours after the last episode of vomiting or diarrhoea.

There's not much that can be done to treat Norovirus; symptoms generally last a couple of days. Children should drink plenty of water, and can be given liquid paracetamol to help with feverish aches and pains. To stop the virus spreading, they should avoid going to the GP or to Accident & Emergency. If symptoms last longer than a few days, call NHS111. For more advice, visit NHS Choices (www.nhs.uk/conditions/norovirus).

The logo for 'Health for Kids!' features the word 'Health' in a large, multi-colored font (blue, orange, green, red). Below it, the words 'for Kids!' are written in a smaller, multi-colored font (green, red, orange, blue) with a white star above the 'i' in 'Kids!'.