



The Nurse's Corner



Flu Season



It's that magical time of year again when fireplaces and hot chocolate warm us up, sweaters make their appearance, the smell of Christmas trees fill the air, and flu season rears its ugly head. While seasonal flu viruses are detected year-round in the United States, flu viruses typically circulate during the fall and winter. So, let's talk about the flu and what to expect.

What is the Flu and What are the Symptoms?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Flu symptoms usually come on suddenly. People who have flu often feel some or all of these symptoms:

- fever* or feeling feverish/chills (although not everyone will have a fever)
- cough
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose
- muscle or body aches
- headaches
- fatigue (tiredness)
- some people may have vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children)



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*The time from when a person is exposed and infected with flu to when symptoms begin is about two days, but can range from about one to four days.

*Your health care provider will conduct a physical exam, look for signs and symptoms of flu, and possibly order a test that detects influenza viruses.

How is the Flu Spread?

Most experts believe that flu viruses spread mainly by tiny droplets made when people with flu cough, sneeze, or talk. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby. Less often, a person might get flu by touching a surface or object that has flu virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose or possibly their eyes.

You may be able to spread flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as when you are sick with symptoms.

- People with flu are most contagious in the first 3-4 days after their illness begins.
- Some otherwise healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to five to seven days after becoming sick.
- Some people, especially young children and people with weakened immune systems, might be able to infect others for an even longer time.

How to Prevent the Flu?

The first and most important step in [preventing flu](#) is to get a flu vaccine each year. The flu vaccine has been shown to reduce flu related illnesses and the risk of serious flu complications that can result in hospitalization or even death. CDC also recommends everyday preventive actions (like staying away from people who are sick, covering coughs and sneezes, and frequent handwashing) to help slow the spread of germs that cause respiratory (nose, throat, and lungs) illnesses, like flu.



How to Treat the Flu?

Usually, you'll need nothing more than rest and plenty of fluids to treat the flu. But if you have a severe infection or are at higher risk of complications, your health care provider may prescribe an antiviral medication to treat the flu. If you do come down with the flu, these measures may help ease your symptoms:

- **Drink plenty of liquids.** Choose water, juice and warm soups to prevent dehydration.
- **Rest.** Get more sleep to help your immune system fight infection. You may need to change your activity level, depending on your symptoms.
- **Consider pain relievers.** Use acetaminophen (Tylenol, others) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin IB, others), to combat the aches associated with influenza. Children and teens recovering from flu-like symptoms should never take aspirin because of the risk of Reye's syndrome, a rare but potentially fatal condition.



To help control the spread of influenza in your community, stay home and keep sick children home until the fever has been gone for 24 hours. Avoid being around other people until you're feeling better, unless you're getting medical care. If you do need to leave your home and get medical care, wear a face mask. Wash your hands often.

Children and Adolescents Consuming Energy Drinks. Is it Safe?

Is your child consuming energy drinks? Did you know that up to 50% of adolescents report consuming energy drinks? There is a chance they are getting access to them without your knowledge. It's important to stay informed about things that can negatively affect your child's health and well-being. Following is some information regarding energy drinks and the effects they can have on growing and developing bodies.

What are the possible effects of consuming energy drinks?

- Increased heart rate, High blood pressure, Heart palpitations - all of which can have a negative impact on a child's growing and developing body. Consumption of empty calories leaves less room for proper nutrition.
- Insomnia - Getting enough sleep is essential for children. A lack of sleep can cause serious problems in children and adolescents, such as decreased brain development, learning problems, and more frequent negative emotions. It can also contribute to weight management problems, growth issues and increased frequency of illness.
- Dehydration - Often causes headaches, low energy levels, and changes in mood and mental status, which is especially important for children who are expected to concentrate all day at school.
- Restlessness - Can affect mental state, cause anxiety, and difficulty concentrating.

What are some suggestions to increase energy and focus naturally for my child to help them succeed in school and all areas of life?

- Getting enough sleep - Good sleep improves brain performance and attention, learning, memory, and improves overall mood, behavior, mental and physical health.
- Getting proper nutrition - A good balance of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats in food along with vitamins and minerals provides calories and essential nutrients to fuel exercise and energize the body.
- Getting daily physical activity - Regular physical activity can help children and adolescents improve cardiorespiratory fitness, build strong bones and muscles, control weight, reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, and reduce the risk of developing health conditions such as heart disease, cancer, and Type 2 diabetes. It also improves memory and brain function, quality of sleep, and increases life span.
- Staying hydrated - Some benefits of hydration include improved sleep quality, improved cognition, and improved mood and energy. Staying well-hydrated also regulates body temperature, keeps joints lubricated, helps prevent infections, delivers nutrients to cells, keeps organs functioning properly.

<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/nutrition/energy.htm>

Mental Health Support Services

Did you know that WCSD helps support mental and emotional health through programs such as wellness rooms, counseling support on a school level, parent support seminars, associations with Family Health Care clinics and more? Speak to your school's counselor to learn more!

Oftentimes, our students simply need to feel heard in a safe environment with no judgement. Just like adults, children and teens are hard on themselves! We are all human and having compassion for ourselves isn't a natural reaction. Please remember your students are most likely doing the very best they can with what they know. They don't know what they don't know but they can learn and thrive!



Medical Alerts, Health Plans, and Medications at School



Why is the School Nurse Contacting Me?

- Parents may be contacted by the school nurse to update health records we have on file, or to follow up on health information that was shared upon registration, in order to best meet the medical needs of your student.

Who is my student's School Nurse?

- You can find the School Nurse for your student's school on the WCSD website.
<https://washk12.org/student-services/health/school-nurses>

What is a Medical Alert?

- If a student has a medical condition that staff need to be aware of then it can be notated on PowerSchool. Examples include medical and mental health diagnoses. If the diagnosis no longer is applicable, then it can be removed with parent request. For example, if your student has outgrown their asthma, then please update your school nurse with a request that it be removed.

What Medical Conditions Need a Health Care Plan?

- Common conditions needing a health care plan include, but are not limited to, diabetes, asthma, allergies/anaphylaxis, seizures, and daily medications administered during

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school hours. For the nurse to create a health care plan, the proper medical forms must be completed by the parent and signed by the student's medical provider. These forms can be found on the WCSD website at this link: <https://washk12.org/student-services/health/health-forms-documents#medication-medical-forms>

- **My Diabetic Student is independent in treatment; do I really need to complete the medical forms?**
 - At minimum you would want to provide the Diabetes Management Medication Orders (DMMO) as it would provide medical orders for glucagon to be given by the nurse and/or trained school staff.

How often do medical forms need to be updated?

- It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to ensure that the required medical authorization forms are current. The authorization form must be done with the student's health care provider, with signature of both parent and health care provider (WCSD Policy 2320 2.1.3.1)

Who qualifies as a Health Care Provider that can sign the medical forms?

- The Health Care Provider must qualify to write prescriptions (i.e. physician, dentist, nurse practitioner, physician's assistant, or mental health therapist) in order to sign the medical forms.

What is the easiest way to get the Medical forms signed by a Healthcare Provider?

- If your student has an established Health Care Provider, you do not need to set an appointment. Simply fill out the form and sign the parent/guardian section. Next, fax or email the form to the health care provider's office and request they review the medication orders, sign, and fax it back to your student's school.

How can Non-Medical School Staff give Medications and provide healthcare tasks?

- Since a Registered Nurse oversees the healthcare of students at multiple schools, healthcare in the school setting is primarily provided by "volunteer" staff members (often health aides, secretaries, or teachers) who have received training and delegation of specific tasks from their school nurse. Without the proper medical forms signed by parent/guardian and a medical provider, the nurse cannot provide or delegate any care or medications needing to be administered. (See WCSD Policy 2320 2.2)

How are medications safely stored at school?

- Medication must be delivered by the parent/guardian in the original pharmacy-labeled, or manufacturer's container, where it will be **counted**, recorded, and stored in a **locked** unit for safe keeping. Medications that have been prescribed to be self-administered can possibly be kept with the student or in the front office. (WCSD Policy 2320 2.3)
- Insulin or emergency medications, such as: epinephrine auto-injectors, asthma inhalers and glucagon, **are not locked up**, but rather are stored in a secure and readily available location. (WCSD Policy 2320 2.3.1)

Do all medications given at school require a signature from the Health Care Provider?

- For secondary students only (grades 6-12): Consideration will be given to allow the students to carry/self-administer one dose of an easily identified prescription medication, or non-prescription over the-counter medication, with the exception of syrups (typically used to treat coughs or colds). This form only needs to be signed by parent/guardian, and does NOT require a form with the Health Care Providers signature. (WCSD Policy 2320 2.4.2)

Can ADHD/ADD or Pain Medications be carried and self-administered by my student?

- Controlled Substances (i.e. ADHD/ADD medications, opioids, etc.) CANNOT be carried and self-administered by students on WCSD property. Carrying these medications is grounds for suspension or expulsion from school (WCSD Policy 2320 2.4 and Utah Code Title 53G Chapter 8)

Where can I find the full Medication Policy for Students?

WCSD Medication Policy :

https://washk12.org/images/departments/student_services/health_forms/district_medication_policy_2320_updated_2018.pdf

Utah Code governing Controlled Substances:

https://le.utah.gov/xcode/Title53G/Chapter8/C53G-8-S205_2018012420180124.pdf