

## March Article 1 – Is Your Student Feeling Sick?

Well, it's about that time of year. You may hear it when you talk to your student –an intermittent snuffle, the occasional sneeze or, for the unlucky amongst our students, the full-out misery that can accompany the cold and flu season.

Your students no doubt experienced many colds or even the occasional flu during their high school years and, though it was no doubt unpleasant, they did survive. Now that your students are in college, however, several key differences exist.

The first is that catching a sickness from a classmate becomes a very easy thing to do, since our students are attending class, eating, and sleeping in much closer quarters than they were in high school. The second major difference is that making up for one or two days of missed classes in college due to sickness requires much more effort than it did for the same amount of time in high school. And the last key difference is simply that they are here – at college, away from the comforts only parents can provide when their children are sick.

As a result, you may be receiving phone calls from a student who is sick, stressed, and missing home.

So what should your students be doing now if they are experiencing any of these symptoms?

First, if they start to feel sick, encourage them to make an appointment at the [Health Center](#) (503-943-7134). Should they start to feel better, they can always cancel– but if they start to feel worse, they will be happy they have the appointment on the books.

If your student does meet with the Health Center, encourage them to clearly articulate his or her symptoms. Hearing that a student has a runny nose is one thing, but hearing that he or she has a runny nose, is running a fever, and has asthma may be something different. The more our health care professionals know about your student's symptoms, the more effectively they will be able to treat.

Also, encourage your student to not believe rumors - we hear every year from students who say the Health Center is backed up two weeks for an appointment. We know, however, that this is not the case. During cold and flu season, the next appointment may not be for one or two days – which is one reason we recommend students make an appointment right when they start to feel ill. Some appointments for the Health Center, such as a physical for studying abroad, may be scheduled for several weeks out; when students hear this, they may incorrectly believe it applies to all appointments. So, if your student is feeling ill, encourage him or her to make that call to the Health Center and see for themselves how quickly they can be seen.

Of course, the best way to avoid all of this is to not get sick in the first place. So our final piece of advice for your student comes from the Health Center.

Some very simple but **very important** ways to help prevent a cold/flu virus:

- 1) WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN; Scrub all areas vigorously for 40-60 seconds.
- 2) DON'T COVER YOUR COUGHS/SNEEZES WITH YOUR HANDS; cover with inside of arm/inner elbow.
- 3) DON'T TOUCH YOUR FACE; Cold and flu viruses enter your body through the eyes, nose, or mouth.
- 4) DRINK PLENTY OF FLUIDS; Water flushes your system, washing out the toxins as it rehydrates you.
- 5) PRACTICE SOCIAL DISTANCING; Maintain 6 ft distance between yourself and others that have cold/flu symptoms. If you have cold/flu symptoms maintain 6 ft from all others to prevent the spread of the virus.
- 6) DON'T SMOKE; Heavy smokers get more colds - more often and more severe. One reason is smoke dries out your nasal passages and paralyzes the cilia (lining the nose and airway) that would otherwise be moving and sweeping the cold/flu bugs out of the upper respiratory system.
- 7) DECREASE ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION; Alcohol can cause dehydration. It actually takes more fluid from the body than it puts in.
- 8) RELAX; Relaxing/De-stressing can help boost your immune system. There is actual evidence that when someone is relaxed, their interleukins (part of the immune system that helps fight cold and flu viruses) increase in the bloodstream.