Cold, Flu, and Disease Prevention Tips

By Carolyn Riley, District Nurse, Health Specialist

Recently, Dr. Sara Cody, Santa Clara County Health Officer, said the best thing you can do to help prevent you, your child, and others from catching and spreading diseases is "wash your hands with soap and water, keep your children home from school if they are sick, cover your coughs, and avoid close contact with sick people." If you only remember one thing, it is that thorough hand washing with soap and water is the SINGLE most effective method of preventing the spread of disease.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend following the steps below to prevent catching and spreading cold, flu, and other diseases such as enterovirus (EV-D68):

1. Wash hands with soap and water frequently, including after using the restroom.  
   Alcohol-based hand cleaners do not kill enteroviruses.
2. Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
3. Cover your cough.
4. Stay home of you are sick.
5. Get a flu shot, since the flu can cause serious respiratory illness

Your child needs to stay home from school when he or she has:

- Any contagious disease.
- Nausea or vomiting in the past 24 hours.
- Fever over 100 degrees in the past 24 hours without fever reducing medication.
- Frequent coughing or very runny nose.
- Diarrhea in the past 24 hours.
- Persistent sore throat, earache or severe headache.
- Skin rash (must be diagnosed by health care provider).
- Open, draining sores unless can be covered and contained by a dressing.

Recent media reports have heightened awareness about EV-D68 and Ebola. There are no cases of Ebola in Santa Clara County or California. On October 17, the Santa Clara County Public Health Department confirms: “There is no Ebola in Santa Clara County, and the risk to the residents is low.”

Enteroviruses are a very common kind of virus, but the D68 strain can cause mild cold like symptoms to severe respiratory illness in some patients, particularly those who are young and have asthma. If your child has cold like symptoms and has asthma or difficulty breathing, make sure to contact your health care provider without delay. Information for parents on EV-D68 can be accessed at http://www.cdc.gov/features/evd68/index.html.

For the latest info on diseases in Santa Clara County, visit: www.sccphd.org and select "Information for Residents."