

Actions and Attitudes For Keeping Your Children Healthy

from the American Counseling Association

Fall and winter tends to mean more sick kids. Every school-aged child is exposed to lots of viruses and germs every day. And while we realize that minor infections and illnesses are probably inevitable, there are a number of ways we can help our children avoid or fight off some of those cold and flu bugs.

Teaching preventative hygiene, like frequent hand washing and not sharing mouth-touched drinks and foods with friends, can certainly help. Preventative medicine, like flu shots, is also important.

A healthy diet and plenty of rest are also vital. Our bodies are usually great at fighting off the bacteria and viruses we encounter daily, but poor nutrition and lack of rest can rob them of the strength to combat those illness-causing bugs.

Another goal, one that many parents fail to recognize, is in helping your child reduce his or her stress. Research has found that stress weakens the immune system, yet even very young children encounter school and friend situations that raise stress levels.

Most of the time, parents don't need to fix the stress-inducing problem for their children, but rather they just need to be a sympathetic and understanding audience. Really listening to your child's concerns can reduce feelings of anxiety and stress.

If your child does fall ill, helping create a more positive attitude can lead to a quicker return to good health. Simply smiling, for example, can make a big difference.

When a parent of a sick child looks worried and concerned as they talk to that child it helps convince the child that he or she should also feel worried and concerned. A big smile, instead, helps relieve tension and anxiety, and creates an attitude of wellness rather than sickness.

You also want to use positive phrases with your child. Instead of repeatedly asking what hurts or what's wrong, try asking what's feeling better or what's good.

The simple acts of touching and hugging can also be great medicine. Studies have found that touching and bonding literally help strengthen the immune system. Holding an ill child while watching TV or reading a book together can mean getting better faster.

Viruses and bacteria are always going to be out there. But healthy eating, plenty of rest and loving parents who are there to help a child have a positive, less-stressful attitude can do a great deal to keep those bugs at a distance.

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