

Dear Parent or Guardian,

Winter is upon us and despite your best efforts, your child is likely to get a **cold** or **virus**. A cold is a mild infection of the upper respiratory system caused by a virus. Viruses are too small to be seen by the naked eye. They can't multiply on their own, so they have to invade a 'host' cell and take over its machinery in order to be able to make more virus particles.

There are many different types of viruses, which may cause a cold. Many young children will have between 5-6 colds per year.

### **What are the symptoms of a cold/virus?**

Symptoms may include runny and stuffy nose, coughing and sneezing, sore throat, mild fever, swollen glands, and stuffy or congested ears. A cold may last up to 2 weeks. Green mucus is common in the healing stages of a cold and does not indicate a need for antibiotics. Symptoms of cold and flu (influenza) are very similar; however the flu is generally worse than a cold and symptoms such as fever, body aches, dry cough, and tiredness are more extreme.

### **How are colds/viruses spread?**

Colds are easily spread from person-to-person through the air by coughing or sneezing. Surfaces and hands contaminated with nose, mouth, or throat secretions may also spread cold viruses. Viruses such as strep throat or scarlet fever can be passed on by touching or shaking hands with another person. Symptoms may include sore throat, fever, headache, swollen lymph nodes in neck and decreased appetite. Scarlet fever is a sandpaper-like rash that sometimes occurs in people that have strep throat. The rash is usually more prominent in the armpits and groin area. Children younger than three years with strep throat rarely have a sore throat. Most commonly, these children have a persistent nasal discharge, fever, irritability, and loss of appetite.

### **How is a cold/virus treated?**

There is no cure for the common cold. Colds rarely require medical treatment and antibiotics are not effective against colds. Measures may be taken to help relieve the symptoms, which may include getting enough rest and drinking plenty of fluids.

### **How do you control the spread?**

Make sure adults and children wash hands frequently and thoroughly. Antibacterial soap is not necessary; use plenty of plain liquid soap and warm water. Teach children to cover their noses and mouths with a tissue or their arm when coughing or sneezing. When using a tissue, wash hands well afterwards. Avoid touching the eyes, mouth, or nose. Clean and disinfect commonly touched surfaces frequently.

**However, if the child is too sick to participate in normal activities, is contagious to classmates/staff and has a fever of 100.0 degrees or higher, they should be kept at home.**

