

# Nursing News

## Is it a Cold, Allergies or the Flu?

The season has arrived for colds and flu. Viruses cause colds and flu. These viral infections are usually spread by direct or indirect contact of an infected person. The virus can live for several hours on a variety of surfaces. This is why it is important to have good hygiene habits. Other reminders include the following:

- Cover mouth when coughing or sneezing. By covering your mouth with the inside of your bent elbow you avoid contamination of your hands.
- Throw away used tissue and wash hand frequently
- Don't share food or drink.
- Secondhand smoke increases the rate of respiratory illness in children.
- Encourage plenty of sleep, fluids and a balanced diet.

Allergies are caused by environmental exposure to such things as dust, mold animals, ragweed, smoke etc. To help control symptoms the best method is to avoid exposure. The next step would be to consult with a physician regarding a plan of care to avoid incidents of symptoms. The plan of care may include preventive measure such as antihistamines etc.

It can be confusing to know what your child has. Does he/she have a cold, flu or is it their allergies? The follow will provide information on symptoms:

Symptoms	Cold	Flu
Fever	Occasionally (Low grade)	Characteristic High (102°-104° F) Sudden onset: lasts 3-4 days
Headache	Occasionally	Prominent
General aches and pains	Slight	Usual: often quite severe
Fatigue and weakness	Mild	Extreme: can last 2-3 weeks
Prostration (extreme exhaustion)	Never	Early and prominent
Runny, stuffy nose	Common	Sometimes
Sneezing	Usual	Sometimes
Sore throat	Common	Sometimes
Chest discomfort, cough	Mild to moderate; hacking cough	Common: can be severe

Allergy	Cold
Nasal discharge remains watery.	Nasal discharge gradually thickens and crusts.
More sneezing.	Less sneezing
Little or no cough.	Coughs starts dry and becomes loose. Worse with exertion.
Comes and goes during entire season.	Duration 1-3 weeks.
Eyes usually red.	Eyes usually not red.
Fewer lymph nodes in neck.	More neck nodes.

Referral to physician is advised for complications such as earache, fever, vomiting, headache, loss of appetite, sore throat and chronic cough. Several parents have called to clarify when their child can return to school. The Shawnee Mission School District encourages parents to keep children home for 24 hours after a fever and symptoms subside to ensure that they are well enough to be in school. This eliminates exposure to others and allows the student to return with optimal wellness. Please refer to the Broken Arrow's Parent Handbook for detailed guidelines on why children are sent home and when they should return to school. Let's keep our school healthy!