Seasonal illnesses at St Anne's

When it's that time of year and seasonal illnesses abound, nobody likes to be sick! Sometimes it seems like there is nothing we can do to avoid contracting some troublesome bug. We know that getting sick means your children may miss school and you may miss work, both of which are things we all want to avoid!

Many common illnesses are easily passed on in the playground, and it's best to be prepared.

Tummy bugs

With these, it isn't a matter of if, but when. Most tummy bugs are caused by viruses which can be easily passed on through hand-to-hand contact - and there's lots of that at school! The main symptom is diarrhoea, which can last for a few days. Vomiting is also common, although this tends to settle within a day or so. They can eat if they want, but it's really important they get plenty of fluids (not fruit juice or fizzy drinks) into them.

Tummy bugs are very infectious

We understand this is a very busy time for families and time off work to look after little ones isn't easy, but we follow Health Protection Agency guidelines and insist on 48 hours from the last period of sickness and/or diarrhoea in an attempt to contain the virus and settle the symptoms.

Coughs and colds

What causes coughs and colds and what are the symptoms?

Most coughs and colds are caused by germs called viruses. Many different viruses can infect the nose and throat. They are passed on by coughing and sneezing the virus into the air. An average preschool and primary school child has 3-8 coughs or colds per year. Sometimes several coughs or colds occur one after the other. A child who lives with smokers has an increased risk of developing coughs and colds.

- The common symptoms are a cough and a runny nose. The cough is often worse at night. Coughing does not damage the lungs.
- In addition, a child may have a raised temperature (fever), a sore throat, headache, tiredness, and be off their food. Sometimes children may be sick (vomit) after a bout of coughing.
- A build-up of mucus behind the eardrums may cause dulled hearing or mild earache.

What are the treatments for coughs and colds?

There is no magic cure! Typically, symptoms are worse in the first 2-3 days, and then ease over the next few days as the immune system clears the virus. An irritating cough may linger for up to 2-4 weeks after other symptoms have gone. Antibiotics do not kill viruses, so are of no use for common coughs and colds.

Coughs and colds often do not need any treatment. Make sure your child has enough to drink as low body fluid (dehydration) may develop if a child has a raised temperature (fever) and does not drink much.

Treatment aims to ease symptoms. Paracetamol can ease aches and pains, headaches, and fever or Ibuprofen is an alternative. Both are sold in pharmacies in liquid form for children. There are various brands - ask the pharmacist if you are unsure what is suitable.

Vapour rubs are another popular treatment. They can be applied to the chest and back (avoid application to the nostril area in small children, for safety reasons). Again, there is little scientific evidence as to how well they work.

Inhaling steam can also help relieve congestion and coughing. The safest way to do this with children is to sit in the bathroom with a hot shower/hot taps running.

Sucking menthol sweets can help ease sore throats in older children.

School is not able to administer or store any antibiotics. In the event that your child requires antibiotics, please ask your GP for antibiotics which are to be given three times a day so they can be administered before and after school.

Please ensure that the school office has up to date contact details for authorised people who may be able to collect your child should they need to go home from school due to illness.