Prevent Illness While Going Back to School

As school begins, children throughout the community will begin spending less time outdoors and more time in the classroom with their classmates. Along with the swell in classrooms comes the sharing of space and potentially germs. Educational settings often create a close setting for groups of students; they become a perfect location for diseases to spread. Consider a child with a cold who sneezes in the classroom. A child sitting two desks away will breathe the same air containing viruses from the infected child and could be infected with the same cold or flu.

The Springfield-Greene County Health Department has seen an increase in several diseases this year like influenza, whooping cough, measles, and E. coli. As a precaution, please be aware of illness in your children and how disease can be spread. Influenza, whooping cough (pertussis) and measles are spread through the air and through contact with someone who is experiencing illness. E. coli, on the other hand, is spread by person-to-person contact with someone who is ill.

The spread of infectious diseases can be slowed or prevented by following a few simple steps:

- The single most effective means to prevent illness is to wash your hands with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Use disinfecting wipes on surfaces and frequently used objects.
- Sneeze into elbow or sleeve rather than into hands.
- Use tissue once and discard.
- Encourage students and staff who are ill to stay at home until they feel better to prevent spreading disease to others.
- Don’t share food and drink with others.
- Keep your hands away from your eyes and out of your mouth.
- Ensure vaccinations are up to date for you and your child.

Remember, by protecting yourself and your family, you are keeping your loved ones safe from illness as well as doing your part to protect your community.

For more information on preventing illness, please contact Kendra Williams at 417-864-1408.

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