

Health Notes

By Audeen Wagner

Some "winter woes" for parents and children:

STREP THROAT If you have a child complaining of a severe sore throat, fever or headache, it could be a strep throat infection; the clinic has been seeing many cases. Strep can be diagnosed with a throat culture or a rapid strep test. This can be a very serious disease in children because of potentially severe (but rare) complications.

DO NOT give antibiotics without doctor's orders; this is very important because antibiotics interfere with the accuracy of a strep test. A child with a very sore throat needs to be seen in the clinic, according to Laura Nichols, PA.

CHICKENPOX Has chickenpox struck your household yet? We hear it is going around.

Chickenpox is caused by a virus which is highly contagious. The incubation period is about two weeks, which means that if your child is coming down with it, most likely he was around a child with chickenpox about two weeks before.

- At first you will see small, red bumps. These bumps may be thin-walled water blisters.
- After that, you may see cloudy blisters or open sores.
- In about a day, they will turn into dry, brown crusts.
- More and more red bumps will crop up all over your child's body for about 4-5 days.

Chickenpox can spread to other people until all the sores have crusted over, generally in 6 or 7 days after the rash starts.

Treatments for chickenpox:

For itching: Give a cool bath every 3 to 4 hours. Add 4 table-spoons of baking soda to the tub. If the itching is very bad, or keeps the child from sleeping, give your child Benadryl (available without a prescription).

For fever: For a fever of 102 degrees or more, give acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Do not give aspirin.

For sore mouth: Give soft foods and cold fluids. For babies, use a cup instead of a bottle. Avoid salty foods and citrus fruits. You can also have your child gargle or swallow 1 tsp of an antacid after meals.

For preventing infected sores: Trim your child's fingernails short. Also, wash your child's hands with an antibacterial soap often during the day.

Call your doctor right away if:

- Your child has red skin, red streaks, or red rash.
- Your child starts acting very sick.
- If a scab looks infected
- If the itching is very bad and doesn't respond to treatment.
- You have other questions or concerns.

And the really good news: A chickenpox vaccine is now available. Most physicians recommend this vaccine for children who haven't had chickenpox. It can be given at any time after 12 months of age. Call your caregiver for more information on this.

Next Mammovan visit: March 20. Call the clinic to schedule.

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