



HEALTH HAPPENINGS

Welcome Back to Montague Elementary School.

Get kids off to a healthy start this school year with these tips for good nutrition, reduced stress, regular exercise, and healthy habits.

Always start the day with a nutritious breakfast. It is the most important meal of the day and provides your children with the energy and health they need to do their best work in school. Children should not be sent to school without breakfast with the excuse that they got up late and did not have the time to eat. Offer cereal or granola bars, bagels with peanut butter, cups of yogurt or left over pizza, which can be eaten at the bus stop or in the car on the way to school. Load up your children's lunchboxes with a colorful mix of fruits and raw vegetables. Offer water to drink as an alternative to sugar laden fruit drinks. White, 2% or 1% milk is always a wholesome choice for calcium, along with non- or low-fat dairy foods, which are necessary for strong bones and teeth. Drinking plenty of fluids helps keep our skin (our best defense from invading bacteria and viruses) soft and supple. Whole grains are an important part of a healthy diet too. 100% whole grain bread is a good choice for making sandwiches, while whole grain crackers make a good snack along with low fat cheese and spreads.

Make sure your children run around for at least an hour each day. Several short, 15 minute bursts of running, jumping or games keeps kids interested and active. Bond with your kids and boost the whole family's health by planning family bike rides, walks or other exercise you can all do together. Watching TV or playing video games should be limited to no more than 1 hour a day.

Set up back-to-school routines to make the start of school easier and less stressful. Children need 9-10 hours of solid sleep a night in order to be mentally sharp and ready to learn. Carrying a backpack should not be a workout for your child. Pack the bag as lightly as possible, with heavier items in the center compartment. The load should never be more than 10% of your child's body weight. Your child may need to carry some books with their arms if the backpack weight is excessive.

Head Lice and skin rashes. Children's heads have been examined and head lice have not been found. However, I would encourage all parents to diligently examine their children's head and bodies when bathing, shampooing and combing hair, etc. Head lice can be present in any season and can be transferred from sources outside of the school. Be diligent in examining your children for any skin conditions such as rashes that spread and do not heal. Dry, winter air temperatures will be upon us and our best defense in staying healthy is having healthy, supple skin. Dry, cracked skin allows bacteria, viruses, and fungi to enter our bodies, causing disease and other skin conditions.

Illness and influenza. The outbreak of disease in people caused by a new influenza virus of swine origin continues to grow in the U.S. and internationally. Concern over the recent outbreak of H1N1 influenza

has been growing. As part of a public health response, our administration would like to acknowledge those concerns as well as to give you practical things you can do to limit the spread of germs.

H1N1, aka Swine Flu, is a viral strain similar to the strain of influenza to which people were exposed during last year's winter months. Like any communicable virus, precautions should be taken not to spread germs to others. Some actions that people can take now to prevent illness and limit its transmission are:

1. Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing. If a tissue is not available, cough into your elbow or sleeve, not your hands. Throw away the tissue after using it.
2. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing. A hand sanitizer is a 2nd line of defense if soap and water are not available.
3. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with your hands.
4. Avoid close contact with sick people.
5. Stay home if you or your children are ill. **Do not return to work or school until you or your child has been without a fever (over 100 degrees) for 24 hours, without the use of medication.**
6. Families and individuals should take the opportunity to create, review and update their family emergency plans. A contingency plan should be in place that would provide for a babysitter to stay home with a sick child in case a parent must return to work before the child is well. **Children should not be sent to school after a morning dose of analgesic, i.e. Tylenol or Motrin, to allow a parent to return to work before the child is really better.**
7. Anyone who is experiencing flu-like symptoms: fever over 100 degrees and a cough, and/or a sore throat, which is not attributed to a known cause, such as strep throat, should contact their healthcare provider.
8. Be pro-active and consider getting both the general fall flu shot, as well as the H1N1 flu shot, when they become available.
9. Drink plenty of water or other liquids.
10. Get sufficient sleep (10 hours for elementary school children).
11. Use lotion to keep skin from drying and cracking. Apply lip balm on lips.
12. Dress for the weather to keep up your resistance to germs and bacteria.
13. Do not share glasses, cups, utensils, food and beverages.
14. When possible, sanitize your kitchen and bathroom with a disinfectant, such as chlorine bleach.
15. Humidify bedroom air or keep a window slightly open when sleeping.

An antiviral medication can be prescribed by a physician should anyone in your home contract the flu. It will lessen symptoms and reduce the risk of complications if taken within 48 hours after flu symptoms begin. Please notify the Health Office if your child has flu-like symptoms so that the incidence of influenza at school can be monitored.

The Sussex County Department of Environmental and Public Health Services have trained staff, emergency response plans and protocols in place to respond to public health emergencies such as a possible H1N1 epidemic. The Sussex County website has the most current information about influenza available and links to both the CDC and NJDHSS at www.sussex.nj.us. You can also visit the Center for

Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/swineflu. www.flu.gov is another website for information regarding influenza. For the availability of other educational materials contact Sussex County's Health Educator, Tracy Storms at 973-579-0370, ext. 1233.

Attendance. Our main purpose is to educate your child. This can not be accomplished if your child is continually absent or is away from his/her classroom and in the Health Office excessively. Please teach your children that they should not visit the Health Office unless they are truly ill or in need of first aid. I will advise you if your child establishes a "frequent flier" status. When your children will be absent from school, **please call the attendance line and be specific with the reason for absence.** Illnesses are tracked for disease reporting purposes with the Sussex County Health Department.

Medication Policy. Please review the Medication Policy found in the Student Handbook. No medications will be administered without a written prescription by the dispensing doctor. **Parents must drop off and pick up medications which should be in their original containers.** Students are not permitted to carry any medications to or from school with the exception of life-saving epinephrine auto injectors and inhalers. A self-administration form must be on file in the Health Office in order to carry these medications.

Screenings. Vision and hearing screenings for grades K, 1, 3, 4, and 6 will begin the first or second week of October. All students in every grade will have their heights, weights and blood pressure measured. Referrals will be mailed home for those students whose vision and or hearing is deficient. Because obesity and related illnesses such as heart disease and diabetes are now being seen in young children, all students will have the Body Mass Index (BMI) computed and referrals will be mailed home for those students whose BMIs place them in the 95th percentile and above (the definition for obesity) or in the 10 percentile and below. You will also be notified if your children gain or lose a significant amount of weight from one school year to the next.

To keep open the lines of communication, please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns regarding the well-being of your children. The Health Office is open from 8:15 am until 3:15 pm. I can be reached at 973-293-7131, ext. 214 or by email at jalles@montagueschool.org.