

AND IT'S AUGUST!

It's hard to believe that summer is already over. I will admit that I'm still enjoying these 90+ degree days and you can often find me sitting on the Direct Pediatrics patio mid-day just enjoying the sun while the rest of you are counting down the days until the pumpkin spice lattes return.

FLU VACCINES ARE IN!

The Johnson family rolled up our sleeves and got our flu vaccine at the office this morning. How effective is the flu shot? All I know is that I was in the middle of the nightmare flu season last year and never developed the flu. Technically during a flu season when the vaccine is a good match, it prevents the flu about 60% of the time, and when the vaccine is not a good match for the flu, it prevents the flu about 30% of the time. It's all about how much the flu virus mutates in a season.

BACK TO SCHOOL FROM THE MEDICAL SIDE

By now almost everyone is back to school and...here come the illnesses! Typically school starts on a Wednesday and we start seeing the first sick kids on a Friday. Here's why that may be a good thing...

- Every time we catch a virus, the virus sets up shop in our body and replicates for a while until our body's immune system kills the virus. This whole process takes about 3-10 days. The good news is... our immune system develops memory cells that should remember that particular virus for the rest of our life. If we are exposed to that particular virus a week or a year later, we won't get sick again because those memory cells recognize the virus and signal an immediate attack that stops the virus from replicating and making us sick.
- Although there are about 200 viruses, it's estimated that in any specific part of the world (i.e. Louisville) there are about 20-ish viruses floating around. Once we have been exposed to (i.e. get sick from) those 20-ish viruses, we will have excellent immunity and rarely get sick.
- The average child who starts daycare, preschool or kindergarten typically comes down with 10-12 viruses their 1st year, 5-6 viruses their 2nd year and 2-4 viruses their 3rd year. After that, they've been exposed to all the common viruses and will rarely get sick.
- That first year of school is rough (but great for immune system development). Let's say the average virus lasts 7 days from start to

finish and the average child develops 10 viruses their first year of school. That's 70 days of cough, congestion and runny nose! I'm totally serious when I tell parents to expect their child to have cold symptoms pretty much steadily between October and the end of March during their first year of school. It's immune system boot camp!

- It's always humorous when parents post how their child never gets sick because of the organic foods their child eats combined with the extra vitamins, supplements, immunity boosters, essential oils, and plenty of Lysol. The real reason their child never gets sick is because they haven't started school, and as soon as they do, they come down with all the viruses like everyone else. Viruses in school are unavoidable and good for the body in the long run. Despite all the ads and supplements ("scams") in the pharmacy claiming to boost immunity, the only thing that helps prevent viruses (besides the flu vaccine) is covering mouths when coughing/sneezing and washing hands, but good luck with that for kids under 5!

- When your child does catch a virus, there's nothing they need besides rest, fluids, and TLC. Antibiotics only kill bacteria and have no effect on viruses. Red flags that your child should be seen by the doctor is if they are working harder to breathe because of the virus or are peeing fewer than 3x in 24 hours.

- Lastly, if your child is one of those kids who gets 15+ viruses their first year of school, just remind yourself that they're on their way to that goal of 20 viruses more quickly than most kids- and no, there's nothing wrong with their immune system. My first-born missed 100+ days during his first year of daycare, and missed 3 days of school total between kindergarten and 12th grade.

BACK TO SCHOOL FROM THE PSYCHOLOGY SIDE

Heading to school (or back to school) is exciting for most kids, anxiety-provoking for some kids, and panic-inducing for a few kids. Severe anxiety and school avoidance are not uncommon at the beginning of the school year and all daycares, preschools and elementary schools are typically prepared to handle the very anxious kids during those first few days/weeks. My kids' preschool had the plan in place for a designated staff member to walk/carry anxious kids to feed a turtle (and separate from parents and get a treat for themselves). My kids' elementary school had a giant fish tank and anxious kids could go with the counselor to feed the fish (and give them time and space to calm) at the beginning of the day. So at what point is it reasonable to seek assistance for school avoidance?

- I would say if daily anxiety about going to school is persisting into September, that's a red flag. Not just on Mondays (which are always the hardest mornings for anxious kids), but if your child is struggling every day into September, it's time to check in with your pediatrician
- If your child consistently has physical complaints on school mornings (stomach aches, headaches, "I don't feel good") especially if these symptoms never occur on weekends.
 - I also urge families to use the Johnson family rule for school which is...You go to school unless you have a fever (> 100.3) or have thrown up after midnight.
 - § What if my child has a sore throat? If no fever, take some ibuprofen and go to school
 - § Cough? Cover your mouth with your elbow when coughing, and go to school
 - § Runny nose? Pack Kleenex, wash hands with soap after you blow your nose, and go to school
 - § Stomach ache? Try to poop, then go to school!
- If your child is refusing to go to school due to a specific issue with classmates or teachers, stop into the pediatrician for a discussion
- If your child is physically having to be dragged out of the car or carried into school on a regular basis, it's time to meet with your pediatrician.

BACK TO SCHOOL FROM THE OFFICE SIDE

We want to make sickness as convenient as possible at Direct Pediatrics.

- If your child is sick and you need a school note, you are welcome to bring them in, especially if you are concerned about their condition.
- However, if you are confident that they have a virus, and you have no concerns, you are welcome to schedule a 3 minute telehealth visit so I can say that your child has been "seen" and I can email you a school note.
- If you think your child may need an antibiotic, they will need to be seen in the office.

BACK TO SCHOOL IN THE JOHNSON HOUSE

- I will be out of the office from **Wednesday August 20th through Sunday August 24th** to drive Michael to New York City where he is transferring from WKU to NYU to begin his sophomore year. Although I have been to 44 of the 50 states in the US, I have never been to New York City so after I get Michael moved in, I figure it's as good a

time as any to do a little exploring. We have tickets to go to a Broadway show (The Outsiders) and I plan to do the double decker bus tour, but am definitely open to suggestions for must-see attractions.

- As always, I will be available by text in NYC, but if your child needs to be seen, Dr. Stewart will be available
- Matthew took summer classes at Florida State this summer, is home for a week and returns back to Tallahassee to begin his junior year next week.
- Alexis started her sophomore year at North Oldham High and is keeping busy playing soccer for North this Fall.

I hope it's been a great summer for all and if back-to-school isn't going smoothly, let me know!

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