

JISD HEALTH SERVICES
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TEN THINGS TEACHERS CAN DO TO CREATE HEALTHY CLASSROOMS

1. Make time to teach and reinforce healthy practices: covering sneezes and hand-washing with soap. Contrary to popular belief, most cold germs are passed on from hands, not from sneezing.
2. Encourage kids to go outside for recess. The outdoor air, especially in winter, is more humid and much fresher than indoor air, which tends to be drying to the mucous membranes, increasing the incidences of nosebleeds, impetigo, chapped lips, ear infections, and upper respiratory infections. Heated indoor air is germ-laden and dusty. The time outside is limited but can be helpful to encouraging health.
3. Try to find alternatives to having kids stay in for recess to finish makeup work. Kids need the change, exercise and sunshine. Unproductive, restless, or unmotivated children probably need it the most.
4. Create opportunities to drink water. Don't think of trips to the water fountain as time-consuming side trips. Most kids drink only the few ounces of fluid that comes with meals. Too little fluid contributes to poor hydration. Poor hydration results in dry mucous membranes, constipation (the cause of most bellyaches in school), headaches (the reason for most visits to the nurse), fever, bladder infections, and dry itchy skin.
5. Empower kids by encouraging self-responsibility for maintaining health and comfort by giving positive reinforcement for choosing healthy food for snacks and lunch, for appropriate dress and for self-care. Don't foster the idea that health and comfort only comes from medicine, or a nurse "fixing" it, or from others taking care of everything for them. You can do this: Have kids wash their own minor scrapes, hang nails and paper cuts in the classroom and apply a band-aid themselves. Offering drinks, rest, time-out and a change in activity may be useful for vague complaints like "I don't feel good". Ask questions and observe. They may be seeking a diversion from work or to deal with frustration.
6. Think about the messages you send to children when they are allowed to leave class for old cuts, scrapes or bruises that are obviously well tended and healing.
7. Consider hunger or needing to use the bathroom when a child complains of a bellyache, especially if it is late morning or early afternoon. Offer a snack for hunger or bathroom break before sending them. Some can wait until lunch if you will encourage them that lunchtime is almost here.

8. Let the child name the problem. Well-meaning teachers can plant an idea by saying, "Johnny, you look terrible. Do you feel bad?"
9. Express the expectation that your class will be healthy. Like the expression of success, children believe you, and will fulfill your expectations. One teacher started by telling her class that she had the healthiest class each year. The most powerful prevention is the teacher's willingness to give psychological as well as physical hugs, and expressing her expectation of wellness.
10. Convey the message that nurses and other health care workers are resources to help them stay well. If every teacher in school did just the nine things listed above, there would be fewer sick children in our school, fewer visits to the nurse, and better school attendance.

*****Please keep in mind that when steps 1-9 do not work, always send the child to the clinic*****