

Self-Care 101

Do you know what to do to take care of yourself when you are not feeling well? Do you stay in bed or go to ER? What about when you are injured...ACE wrap or X-ray? You shouldn't miss class...or should you?



If you are like most, you have depended on someone else to know when to break out the thermometer and put on a pot of chicken soup. Now, it is up to you. Here are some tips –

- Get a thermometer! Health Service can give you one if you don't have one. An oral temperature of 100 F or higher generally indicates fever. A fever is usually a sign of an infection. If you have a fever, drink plenty of fluids, rest, and take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) as directed on the packaging. Seek medical help for a fever if it doesn't respond to medication, is consistently 103 F or higher, or lasts longer than 3 days.
- Sore throats are generally caused from a viral infection (most common cause) or bacterial infection (such as strep throat). Treatment includes self-care measures and antibiotics for bacterial infections. Antibiotics will NOT help viral infections. Self-care measures to relieve a sore throat include increasing fluids, gargling frequently with warm salt water (mix ½ tsp of salt in 1 cup of water). You may use pain relievers like ibuprofen and throat lozenges to ease discomfort. Popsicles will help ease discomfort AND increase your fluid intake. Seek medical help if the sore throat hasn't responded to the self-care measures within 3 days or increases in severity, temperature is over 101, or you develop hard swollen, tender lymph nodes or white spots on your tonsils.
- Colds and Flu are caused by viruses and so are NOT treated by antibiotics. Symptoms can include sore throat, sneezing, stuffy/runny nose, muscle aches, chest discomfort, cough, low grade fever, headache, loss of appetite, and fatigue. Good self-care needs to treat the symptoms. Get plenty of rest, eat soup and drink hot liquids to ease the congestion and loosen secretions, plenty of liquids will help soothe your throat, and long, hot showers may relieve congestion and cough. Ibuprofen will help with fever and muscle aches, acetaminophen will help with fever. Antihistamines and decongestants can ease congestion. Some cough medicines may also be helpful. Seek medical help if you have a high, persistent fever, if you have asthma or are coughing up green phlegm, if you have a severe headache, if you cannot hold down liquids, or if you are just not getting better after **7 – 10 days**.
- Gastroenteritis, an inflammation of your stomach and intestines, is commonly caused by viruses, but can also be caused by food or water contaminated by bacteria or parasites, or can be a side effect from medications. Symptoms include nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps and sometimes a low-grade fever. Self-care measures include - Stop eating for a couple of hours after vomiting to let your stomach settle. For the next 6 hours, sip water, suck on ice chips, popsicles and hard candy, increasing your clear liquid intake as tolerated. Ease back into eating with easy to digest foods such as bananas, rice, applesauce and toast. Avoid milk and dairy products. Seek medical help if vomiting persists more than two days, if urine is dark and you are urinating infrequently, if diarrhea persists more than several days, if the diarrhea turns bloody, if temperature is 101 or higher, or if worrisome abdominal pain develops.
- Injuries due to falls are common. Wash superficial scrapes and shallow cuts with soap and water, apply a triple antibiotic ointment and cover with a bandaid/dressing. Apply an ice pack to bruised or swollen areas. Keep the ice pack in place for no more than 20 minutes at a time. The only certain way to tell if an injury is a fracture, sprain or strain is to seek medical attention for an x-ray. If you bump your head and experience any of these symptoms - nausea, dizziness, blurring vision, headache, drowsiness, confusion, unequal pupil size, seizure or loss of consciousness – you need to go to ER.