



## **An ounce of prevention.....**    *By Rachel Hudak*

Prevention is the name of the game in the New Year! Good hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of illness. In the winter months, viruses and bacterial infections are common. Influenza, Norovirus (the stomach bug), and Group A Strep spread quickly. The best way to prevent these illnesses is to wash, wash, and wash! Soap and water are best, but alcohol based hand sanitizers are an option as well.

### **Just the Facts...**    Influenza (the Flu)

Symptoms:

1. Fever (usually high)
2. headache
3. fatigue
4. dry cough
5. sore throat
6. runny or stuffy nose
7. muscle aches
8. sometimes nausea, vomiting, & diarrhea

How is it spread?

The flu is spread from person to person through coughing or sneezing, touching surfaces infected with the virus and then touching their mouth or nose. People with the flu can infect others beginning one day before symptoms develop and up to 5 days after feeling ill.

### **Norovirus (the stomach bug)**

Symptoms:

1. nausea
2. vomiting
3. diarrhea
4. stomach cramping

How is it spread?

Norovirus is found in vomit and stool of the infected person from the day they begin to feel ill and the virus can remain in the stool of the ill person for 2 weeks or more after they feel better. Those with the virus are most contagious in the first 3 days of illness.

### **Group A Strep**

Symptoms

1. Sore throat
2. fever
3. headache
4. nausea/vomiting
5. persistent cough

How is it spread?

Group A Strep is spread from person to person by sneezing, coughing, sharing food/drinks, touching a surface infected with the bacteria and putting hands to nose or mouth. Group A Strep can be carried on the skin as well and often manifests itself in the throat or as impetigo when a person becomes ill. Those with Group A Strep are most contagious before they show symptoms.