"Only You Can Prevent The Flu"

"Do not touch the T-zone, hand wash regularly, and don't hesitate to vaccinate" is a trilogy for secret to healthier students and staff during each school year. To improve "presenteeism"! And Yes it applies to improve productivity for every business and the family strategy for wellness!

Mandatory regular handwash (soap and sanitizer) intervals and "do not touch the T-zone" are extremely effective at preventing self-inoculation and the spread of flu and flulike infections, RSV, pertussis, croup, coxsackie virus just to name a few, and many other upper and lower respiratory infections. Multiple studies have proven that handwashing four times per day have proven to reduce school absenteeism due to respiratory infections and GI infections by greater than 50%. The four times during the school day are: upon arrival at school, after recess, before eating and after toileting(bathroom). This would seem to be a good interval of time in regularly to mandate handwashing in schools if we were truly interested in maintaining healthy students and staff who we do know are better learners.

And yes, do not touch the T-zone! Your T Zone; the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose and mouth are the only portal of entry into the human body for all respiratory infections. Who knew? Yes, many do but most don't quite understand this elementary concept. They simply wash their hands of behavior. Recent evidence has been confirming that direct inoculation with your fingers or hands are the fomite "cause of inoculation" of one's self by flulike illness and less of direct airborne inhalation as the etiology. Yes, droplets do come out of the nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing and goes through the air, but they reach surfaces due to gravity and are many times picked up directly by a hand or some other object than the individual can directly contaminate their own mucous membranes causing infectious disease events. So when we comply with principles 2 and 3( Do not your cough or sneeze into your hand), for instance, use the Dracula cough or sneeze that some have talked about. “Throw an elbow" is the technique we referred to 23 years ago in daycare and school settings in Cincinnati. The hand is no longer the carrier (fomite) for direct inoculation or deposition of germs on another surface. Applying the practice of the technique of Principle 2 and 3 prevents the spread of germs throughout the environment surrounding the individual who is coughing and sneezing. All in all a very common sense approach to protecting your environment by reducing the spread of infectious disease to many surfaces. So let us lend others a "hand" to learn to practice Principles 2 and 3 and then protect ourselves by practicing Principle #4. The end result is no seasonal epidemic and no pandemic. Imagine the health benefit.

"Don't hesitate to vaccinate!" Flu-like infections do not have vaccine coverage and are a major source of infectious disease events seasonally and annually. There is a vaccine for influenza A and B that is effective at times. Yes, it has had variable efficacy in the past several years, but are recommended annually by the CDC. Yes, there are some individuals allergic to eggs, but there is new evidence that the some may be able to tolerate the flu vaccine. There are some who have a "reaction" to the flu vaccine which is in fact our body's "cytokine reaction" which is an inflammatory response that affects muscles and joints throughout our body. This is why many people will state that they will never have the vaccine again as they had "caught the flu". In fact, it is a cytokine reaction that the body goes through.
Influenza and other influenza-like infectious can lead to chronic disease in both children and adults. This is a discussion that is rarely talked about at a national level, but there is mounting evidence of autoimmune diseases that are set off by viral infections. There are in fact some cancers as well that are initiated by viral infections. Juvenile diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune diseases can be a consequence of a viral infection, so these are additional reasons not to touch the T-zone and to be more "hand aware" as you would not like to develop chronic disease if you were able to prevent this from occurring. Again, the inflammatory response can give you an asthma-like reaction which occurs in viral respiratory infections and can be a major cause of morbidity and in some cases, mortality depending on the amount of swelling that occurs in the respiratory system. This is why the flu can be devastating to individuals as the amount of swelling that occurs in the lungs can lead to suffocation in the fact that could lead to hypoxemia. So if the students and the staff knew that handwashing regularly and not touching the T-zone could prevent lifelong chronic illness, then perhaps there would be much greater attention to these simple behaviors, not just the consequence of absenteeism from school or work.

So please help your fellow students, family and friends understand the potential consequences of such a seemingly innocuous act of touching the T-zone, which are the mucous membranes of the eyes, nose and mouth, in order to "stay well". The flu vaccine may help mitigate the reaction your body has if you were to "give yourself" the flu, but it is not a guarantee. Practicing the 4 Principles of Hand Awareness is as close a guarantee as you come. For more techniques to share with others to improve their compliance with the 4 Principles, please visit henrythehand.com for specific strategies you can use to change human behavior, a very difficult task as we all know. Many have suggested that we need more "soldiers on the ground" teaching and infiltrating schools and communities about these behaviors. Which is why we have the Ambassador program, high school Community Service program as students need community service credits for graduation and option for a Henry the Hand Club. Older students (high school and college) can teach these primary infection prevention strategies effectively to younger children and even adults under the right circumstance. If interested, please contact us to review our Community Service Program for high school students that we have developed based on our infection prevention toolkit for schools.

Thank you very much for your attention. Thank you for spreading the word, not the germs.