**Flu Season is Still Upon Us**
Flu has not reached its peak so it is not too late to get your child’s flu shot. If you would like the flu vaccine for your child and you have not received it yet, please contact the office and schedule a time to come in.

**Tick Safety**
Many people do not realize that unlike fleas, which die off in the winter months, ticks, including Lyme carrying deer ticks, merely hibernate. They can and do awaken anytime the temperature goes above 32°. Make sure to check your children and pets even during the winter any time they are out playing or walking in the woods or other areas where ticks are likely to be found.

**Cold Weather Tips**
Dress Warmly and Stay Dry
Adults and children should wear:
- a hat
- a scarf or knit mask to cover face and mouth
- sleeves that are snug at the wrist
- mittens (they are warmer than gloves)
- water-resistant coat and boots
- several layers of loosefitting clothing

Be sure the outer layer of your clothing is tightly woven, preferably wind resistant, to reduce body-heat loss caused by wind. Wool, silk, or polypropylene inner layers of clothing will hold more body heat than cotton. Stay dry—wet clothing chills the body rapidly. Excess perspiration will increase heat loss, so remove extra layers of clothing whenever you feel too warm. Also, avoid getting gasoline or alcohol on your skin while de-icing and fueling your car or using a snow blower. These materials in contact with the skin greatly increase heat loss from the body. Do not ignore shivering. It’s an important first sign that the body is losing heat. Persistent shivering is a signal to return indoors.

**Frostbite**
Frostbite is an injury to the body that is caused by freezing. Frostbite causes a loss of feeling and color in affected areas. It most often affects the nose, ears, cheeks, chin, fingers, or toes. Frostbite can permanently damage the body, and severe cases can lead to amputation. The risk of frostbite is increased in people with reduced blood circulation and among people who are not dressed properly for extremely cold temperatures.

**Recognizing Frostbite**
At the first signs of redness or pain in any skin area, get out of the cold or protect any exposed skin—frostbite may be beginning. Any of the following signs may indicate frostbite:
- a white or grayish-yellow skin area
- skin that feels unusually firm or waxy
- numbness

A victim is often unaware of frostbite until someone else points it out because the frozen tissues are numb.

**What to Do**
If you detect symptoms of frostbite, seek medical care. If (1) there is frostbite but no sign of hypothermia and (2) immediate medical care is not available, proceed as follows:
- Get into a warm room as soon as possible.
- Unless absolutely necessary, do not walk on frostbitten feet or toes—this increases the damage.
- Immerse the affected area in warm—not hot—water (the temperature should be comfortable to the touch for unaffected parts of the body).
- Or, warm the affected area using body heat. For example, the heat of an armpit can be used to warm frostbitten fingers.
- Do not rub the frostbitten area with snow or massage it at all. This can cause more damage.
- Don’t use a heating pad, heat lamp, or the heat of a stove, fireplace, or radiator for warming. Affected areas are numb and can be easily burned.

The above information is from the CDC Winter Weather | A Prevention Guide to Promote Your Personal Health and Safety
www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/winter/guide.asp
For more cold weather, tips please follow the links below:
http://www.aafa.org
http://www.aap.org
http://rd.com/health/10-cold-weather-safety-tips-for-kids/

**Winter Sports**
Winter sports can be a great way for children to stay active and enjoy colder temperatures, but each sport presents its own unique hazards. These winter safety tips for children can help them enjoy sports safely and comfortably.

- Always use proper safety equipment and gear, including sports goggles and helmets, while playing winter sports.
- Engage in safe sports behavior such as following the rules of the game and eliminating horseplay that can lead to accidents and injuries.
• Enroll children in lessons from a qualified professional for advanced winter sports such as figure skating, skiing and snowboarding to ensure they learn safe techniques.
• Only play winter sports in safe, approved locations rather than using seemingly frozen ponds, unknown hillsides or other potentially dangerous locations.

Staying Healthy
The long days of winter often keep children indoors, which can lead to hours of inactivity. Furthermore, children are more likely to contract illnesses during the winter months because they are in more confined spaces. To stay healthy during the winter, consider these safety tips:

• Eat a healthy, balanced diet that includes fruits and vegetables.
• Teach children proper hand-washing techniques to kill germs and bacteria or use [hand sanitizer](http://safety.lovetoknow.com/Winter_Safety_Tips_for_Children) if necessary.
• Keep children home from school and other public places if they are sick.
• Ask a [pediatrician](http://safety.lovetoknow.com/Winter_Safety_Tips_for_Children) about the necessity for flu vaccines for young children.

Heating Tips
The natural reaction to falling temperatures is to raise the heat, either through external, supplemental heaters or by turning on a fireplace or other open flames. These safety tips can keep away the winter chill without risk:

• Keep candles, kerosene lamps, and other open flames out of reach of children at all times.
• Do not put a space heater in a child’s room.
• Teach children [fire safety](http://safety.lovetoknow.com/Winter_Safety_Tips_for_Children) procedures, including how to spot potential hazards.
• Do not allow children to play in fires such as roasting marshmallows in a fireplace.
• Practice family fire drills to reinforce safe behavior.
• Do not use electric blankets for young children.

Colds, Flu and Bronchitis: Treatment and Care
Colds, flu, most sore throats and bronchitis are caused by viruses. There are no antibiotics that cure these viruses. Using antibiotics when you don’t need them, or not using them correctly, can make your body resistant to the antibiotics, meaning the antibiotics won’t work when you need them. The good news is that your body’s immune system will fight the virus, and, there are things you can do to feel better.

How can I treat a cold, flu or bronchitis?
• Stay home and rest, especially if you have a fever.
• Stop smoking and avoid secondhand smoke.
• Drink plenty of fluids like water, fruit juices, and clear soups.
• Relieve a sore throat by gargling a few times a day with warm salt water (1/4 to ½ teaspoon salt per 8 ounce glass of warm water. Don't drink or swallow the salt water). Throat sprays or lozenges also may help relieve the pain.
• Use salt water (saline) nose spray to help loosen mucus and moisten the tender skin in your nose.
• A clean cool-mist humidifier or steam from a hot shower or bath helps keep the nose and throat moist.

What medicines are available to treat a cold, flu or bronchitis?
There are medicines that don’t require a prescription that can help treat your symptoms, but they do not shorten the length of time you are sick. Some medicines are made to treat more than one symptom, so read the package, and follow the instructions carefully. If you have questions about whether it’s safe for you to take these medicines, call your doctor.

Fever and Aches? These medicines can help you reduce your fever and relieve body aches:
Acetaminophen, such as Tylenol® and other brands
Ibuprofen, such as Advil®, Motrin® and other brands
Aspirin, such as Bayer® and other brands, should be taken by adults only. **Never give aspirin to someone younger than 19 years old unless recommended by a doctor.**

**Cough?** Cough medicines can help you stop coughing so much, which can be helpful, especially at night. There are many different kinds of cough medicines, so if you are not sure what is best for you, ask the pharmacist. **Cough and cold medicines should NOT be given to children younger than age 6.**

Cough medicines may cause serious side effects in people with high blood pressure, diabetes, or heart disease. People with diabetes should use sugar-free cough syrups.

**Nasal congestion (stuffy nose)?** Decongestant medicines help clear your nose so you can breathe better. They shrink the swelling and mucus in your nose and sinuses. Decongestants are sold as tablets or nasal sprays. Children under 6 not be given decongestants. **Decongestants do not work for young children**, and can be harmful. Decongestant tablets taken by mouth such as Sudafed® or other brands should only be taken as directed on the label. These medicines can cause jitters and keep you awake. Decongestants may also raise blood pressure and cause your heart to race. If you have high blood pressure or heart problems, check with your doctor before taking them. Nasal sprays, such as Afrin® and other brands should not be used for more than 3 days because they can actually cause sinus swelling. Nasal sprays contain different types of ingredients. If you are not sure about what to use, ask the pharmacist.

**Runny Nose?** Antihistamines can dry up the mucus in your nose. Benadryl® or other brands dry the nose and throat, but can make you tired, so you should not use them if you will be driving Claritin® and related products are available, and cause less drowsiness but may be less effective for cold-related congestion.

**Wheezing:** Some people with bronchitis develop wheezing, which can cause coughing and shortness of breath. This happens even in persons with no history of asthma, and can be treated with a hand-held inhaler. These require a prescription and should be used as prescribed.

**How can I prevent getting or spreading a virus?**
- Get flu vaccine every year.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand gel.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or into the inside of your elbow if you don’t have a tissue. Throw tissues away and wash your hands. Always wash your hands before touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid close physical contact with people who are sick.
- Do not share eating utensils, drinking glasses, towels or other personal items.
- Use household cleaners to clean things that are touched often, like door knobs, toys, and phones.

**When should I call my doctor?** Call your doctor if you have any of the following symptoms:
- Cough that lasts more than 2 weeks
- Coughing blood
- Fever of 102°F or higher, or fever that lasts more than 3 days
- For infants under 2 months, any temperature of 100.4 or higher, taken rectally
- Shortness of breath during routine activities
- Sinus pain or severe headache
- Any breathing problems or chest pain while taking a breath
- Sinus pain which lasts more than 7 days or sinus symptoms which improve for a few days and then get worse
- Severe earache or drainage from your ear

**When Your Doctor Does Prescribe Antibiotics**
Viral infections sometimes lead to bacterial infections. If your doctor does prescribe an antibiotic for you, make sure that you:
- **Take all of the medicine as prescribed**, even if you feel better after a few days.
- Do not skip doses.
- Do not give any of your medicine to anyone else.
- Do not save any antibiotics for the next time you feel sick.

**Where can I get more information?**
Massachusetts Medical Society
www.massmed.org/YourHealthFirst
Massachusetts Department of Public Health www.mass.gov/flu
US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Get Smart about Antibiotics www.cdc.gov/GetSmart
Tacoma Pierce Health Department: What Can I Do to Fight a Cold, Cough or Sore Throat – Know Common Symptoms and Remedies: http://www.tpchd.org/files/library/eccdcce626d6b52f.pdf