

Activity-away cold, flu season

BY LISA LUCKOW-HEALY
Special Writer

Many of us have experienced the cold or flu bug season ritual of calling in sick to work, school or day care.

Perhaps you had to cancel a day's worth of important meetings or appointments to stay home with a sick child. Maybe your spouse and children spent the weekend hand-delivering your favorite magazines or herbal tea to your bedside.

Parents of school-age children readily admit that once the school year commences, so does the cold and flu season.

"Kids use their hands to explore things at school," said Isabella Van Dorn, mother of two from Birmingham. "Inevitably, the germs get transferred from child to child through handling objects, trading lunches and putting their hands in their mouths before their hands are washed."

New parents are also very susceptible to being bit by the cold bug.

"In a recent visit to our pediatrician, the doctor reminded me that, as new parents, my wife and I are prone to catching colds because we're not getting enough rest while caring for our newborn baby girl," said Brian McDonnell, the father of two from Hamburg.

What do you do with what ails your family? First, follow your doctor's orders. Second, remember sure-fire recuperating staples such as a comfortable place to rest, a warm blanket, your favorite reading material or your child's favorite toys, and the television remote control. Third, activity-away the cold or flu bug.

When not completely bedridden, indoor activities often take our minds off our ailments.

"Oftentimes, some of the best medicine for my children's colds is sitting down together to read their favorite books," Van Dorn said.

"To get my 3-year-old daughter, Amy,

to stay in her room and rest, my husband, Mike, and I turned her room into a dress-up room and castle," said Sue Mackens of Rochester. "She was the princess. When she wanted something, she had to yell down for it. The activity took all our minds off her cold."

Here are a few additional thought-starters to help your family activity-away its ails:

■ **Popcorn Theater** - Because television is always a popular staple of cold and flu season, have some fun with it.

Make theater serving bowl-size popcorn for those family members who are well enough to eat it. Let children design their own movie tickets to reflect the day's featured presentations. Create a theater-style ticket window and concession stand from kitchen counters or family room tables where children can issue tickets, fill refreshment orders and take tickets. Then it's showtime!

■ **The Adventures Of** - It is story time. Time to create "The Adventures Of (your child's name)," a book you and your child can create together with the help of a glue bottle, crayons, markers, blank paper and cover paper (construction paper, contact paper, a collage of favorite pictures, etc.).

Parent or child can start the story with a simple lead, and empower the child to tell the remainder of his or her great adventure as he or she writes it down on the lower half of the paper. Reserve the upper half of each written page for the child's illustration or a photograph of the action, if one exists.

Be creative in the book assembly by using materials and tools found at home or take the finished copy and pictures to a local copy store to have them machine laminated.

Lisa Luckow-Healy is a marketing and public relations consultant and the mother of two from West Bloomfield. Her articles frequently appear in Metro Parent magazine and several business trade publications.

Explore yards, water gardens

The Detroit Garden Center, with instructor Janet Macunovich, is offering a series of gardening classes Saturdays, Jan. 18 and 25 and Feb. 1.

"Landscape Design: Back Yard Edition," a two-session class 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Jan. 18 and 25, will focus on the basic steps of landscape design, and allow participants to go home with a custom design they have prepared of their back yard. Class fee for the two sessions is \$40.

"Practical Water Gardens," 9:30 a.m. to noon Feb. 1, will present information on designing, building and maintaining a water garden. Class fee is \$15.

Classes will be in the auditorium at Historic Trinity Lutheran Church, 1345 Gratiot in Detroit. To register and for more information, call the center at (313) 259-6363.

Macunovich has a gardening column in the Detroit News. Her program, "Green Side Up," is on WXYT-AM.

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