Hello Ladies and Gentleman of the Tournament of Roses Parade Ensemble.

I am Ross Klein, a Physician Assistant in several urgent care departments and in the Emergency Department. Dan Hanson and I will be your medical chaperones on the trip to Pasadena.

All information here is generalized and not specific to you or your children. Be cautious using any medication without review of allergies, medication interactions. Discuss with your doctor and/or pharmacist.

I wanted to take a moment to explain some strategies for keeping you kids healthy before and during this trip (after is smaller priority)

First of all, the most common illness this time of year is viral. This could mean a cold, bronchitis, early sinus problems. There can also be GI illness such as diarrhea and vomiting.

There is no magic medicine to prevent these, with a slight exception to the influenza vaccine. Maximum benefit for the flu shot is 4 weeks, but there has been data suggesting there is benefit as early as 2 weeks after receiving this. Currently, I am only seeing 1-2 cases of flu a week, so hopefully we won’t see much of this on the trip. It is awful, and I can not see a student able to participate with any of the classic symptoms (extreme fatigue, body aches, painful cough, rapid heart rate, fevers).

The only prevention for viruses is plenty of sleep and excellent hand washing.

Things that don’t work (but we wish they did) is Vitamin C. That is not entirely true. There have been some studies that show extreme athletes (triathletes, marathon runners, high altitude climbers) have some decreased illness with Vitamin C.

Zinc has been shown to prevent viral illness, and you have probably heard of the product Zicam. Don’t be fooled, however. The old medicine had zinc, but unfortunately it was causing anosmia (my fancy way of saying loss of smell) and Zicam has changed their formula to something that doesn’t work. They continue to make money…

If you are sick, not too much to do besides symptom management. The only medicines that have been shown to reduce the length of illness are decongestants combined with antihistamines. The strongest Decongestant is pseudoephedrine (Sudafed). This is now sold to you only if you sign for it with the pharmacist. I recommend the standard 4-6 hour medicine. It is restricted, as people were using this medicine to create methamphetamines. As you can imagine, that means that a 12 hour version of this medicine has an excellent chance of ruining your sleep. For antihistamines, Benadryl (diphenhydramine) is the strongest, but will likely knock someone to sleep and the next morning they will have what I like to call, the Benadryl Hangover. If you are going for something mild, try Claritin (loratadine). There are other non-drowsy medicines like Allegra (fexofenadine) and Zyrtec (cetirizine), but most of these medicines are now sold as 24-hour medicines. That means if you do get a bit drowsy from these medicines, you will stay that way for 24-hours. Either get the 12-hour version (hard to find) or stick with Claritin.

For sore throat, body aches, headaches, I suggest good old fashion Tylenol (acetaminophen) and ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin).

Benadryl can also be used in a pinch for nausea/vomiting, anxiety, and motion sickness. It is one of my desert island medicines, but the side effect of drowsiness can not be ignored.

Diarrhea is best managed by lots of fluid. Many times, a medicine that slows diarrhea, makes people sicker, as the virus or bacteria can not leave the body. Probiotics can be used to repopulate the body’s normal bacteria and in turn decrease diarrhea.

I hope this helps. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

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