

Dear Parent or Guardian,

In health class your teen is currently studying communicable diseases—those diseases that can be passed from one person to another. Specifically, we are discussing how communicable diseases spread and how the human body defends against germs and diseases. We are also studying the characteristics of some common communicable diseases, such as measles, hepatitis, and tuberculosis, and identifying lifestyle choices that help protect us and others against communicable diseases. We will conclude by studying the most common sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

Some questions your teen will answer as we study these topics include: *What causes disease, and how are diseases spread? How does the immune system work? What is the most common communicable disease? How can I avoid communicable diseases? How can I protect other people against disease? What is a sexually transmitted disease? What's the best way to avoid getting a sexually transmitted disease? How is AIDS transmitted, and what can I do to avoid getting it?*

I would like to call your attention to the last two questions in particular. The simple answer to both is abstinence from sexual activity before marriage. As we focus on issues related to sexually transmitted diseases, abstinence will be emphasized as one of the most important health decisions young people can make. In addition, your teen will learn specific ways to resist being pressured into having sex.

To support and extend our classroom work, please set aside some time during the next few weeks to complete one or more of the following activities with your teen:

- Visit a pharmacy together. Identify and discuss the value of various over-the-counter medicines, such as remedies for colds, flu, headaches, and sinus infections.
- Develop a home wellness plan to minimize illness in your home. Encourage your teen to suggest appropriate methods he or she has learned in class, and support their implementation.
- Discuss the last time you each had a cold or the flu. Describe what you did to minimize the symptoms and discomfort. Discuss what you can do when you have a cold or flu to reduce the chance of spreading it to other family members.
- Together, determine what home health supplies you have on hand. Decide if you need any additional supplies. If so, visit a pharmacy together to purchase them.
- Make yourself available to answer questions and discuss concerns your teen may have about sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

Please feel free to engage in any other activities that you think will help your teen develop a greater understanding of communicable diseases. This understanding may help you and your teen keep from contracting communicable diseases. Thank you for supporting our classroom work. As always, do not hesitate to contact me for further information.

Sincerely,

Health Teacher