

## **Nursing Notes—October 6, 2020**

Recently, while addressing a pack of students about coronavirus, I startled one young person when I said, “Guys, we’re batting a thousand here at Aldo with Covid-19, so let’s keep up the good work!” Unfortunately, this young student hadn’t grown up playing baseball every spare moment of her day as I had, so she didn’t recognize my odd figure of speech and thought that we had reported a thousand cases at school.

We have reported none, fortunately. We average more than a dozen students in the school building daily, & though a couple have left school feeling poorly, all have presented negative coronavirus tests and have subsequently returned. Thus we are “batting a thousand”; everyone so far has avoided Covid-19.

Quick—cover this list with a hand and see how many of these signs and symptoms of Covid-19 you can name by heart:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Recent loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

That’s quite a list, and as school nurse I by now know it by heart, since I must be on the alert for any of the “telltale” signs and symptoms of this dreaded ailment. Unfortunately, nearly all of the 11 symptoms listed are “telltale” signs of other common illnesses, like the flu, seasonal allergies, and in the case of headache, dehydration while working in the sun moving large boulders. Only “recent loss of taste or smell” stands out as a particularly Covid-distinguishing symptom.

Which leads me to my simple message for today’s Nursing Notes: If your child begins the day with any of these signs or symptoms, consider having them stay home. But if the headache, for example, is a typical accompaniment to your daughter’s monthly menstrual cycle, then common sense prevails: she treats the pain with, say, ibuprofen, and she comes to school or work with the symptom treated. If the headache recurs hours later, she can ask the school nurse for a second dose without fearing that she will be sent home to receive a coronavirus test.

On the other hand, if your child has a fever (the school uses 100 F as our cutoff), a persistent cough, or shortness of breath, they should remain at home. If they have any of the other signs and symptoms, it becomes a judgment call; are the muscle aches the result of a furious bike ride the day before? (Come to school.) Or are they unexplained and accompanied by the general malaise typical of the flu? (Stay home.) Is the nausea a result of eating that week-old leftover burrito in the back of the fridge? (Don't eat slimy food, but come to school.) If your child has been coming to school for study or YCC work, we want them to keep coming—as long as they are no risk to spreading illness of any sort to others. That, in the end, is the common sense that will guide us as we proceed through the pandemic.