

NORMAL CHILDHOOD INFECTIONS

Children can get 8-12 infections per year, and each illness can last 1-3 weeks. So it probably feels like your child is sick all the time! The good news is that most childhood infections are mild and helps them develop immunity to become healthy adults!

How do Infections spread?

- Direct contact: touching or kissing someone who has an infection
- Indirect contact: touching an object that the infected person touched. Common examples include a toy, grocery cart, or money.
- Droplets: Germs in the nose and throat can spread through the air up to 6 feet when the infected person coughs or sneezes
- Airborne: Germs are carried around on air currents. This is a less common way for infection to spread, but measles and chicken pox spread like this and therefore they are very contagious

Since most infections spread by direct contact, indirect contact, and droplets, the best thing you can do to prevent the spread of infection is to wash your hands and your child's hands frequently, especially before meals.

What can I do if my child is sick?

When your child is sick, you want them to feel better. Many parents turn to over the counter cough and cold medicines for help, but there is no evidence that these medications work and many of them are not approved for young children. Apart from acetaminophen or ibuprofen, do NOT give over the counter cough and cold medicines to your child without talking to your doctor first.

Acetaminophen and ibuprofen are ok to give to your child if they are in pain or if you think that fever is making them uncomfortable. However, fever in itself is NOT dangerous and is actually part of how the body fights infection. So you do not need to treat them for just fever. Most fevers from viral infections last 2-3 days. You should see a doctor if your child has fever for more than 3 days

You should take your child to the emergency department or call 911 if they have any signs of a serious infection, such as:

- Has severe trouble breathing or blue lips
- Is hard to wake up or does not respond
- Has a stiff neck
- Seems confused
- Has a seizure (convulsion)
- Hasn't urinated in 12 hours or more



When should I worry about my child having too many infections and if there might be something wrong with their immune system?

- Family history of known immunodeficiency
- Two or more serious sinus infections or pneumonias that were seen on a chest xray within one year
- Eight or more new ear infections in one year
- Diarrhea lasting several months with poor weight gain
- Wounds that don't heal
- More than two episodes of serious infections like meningitis
- Infections that are resistant to treatment with antibiotics
- Recurrent thrush or skin infections

COMMON INFECTIONS

Common Cold

- Caused by a variety of viruses
- Symptoms: Runny nose, nasal congestion, sneezing, cough, sore throat, fever, low appetite, low energy, body aches
- What parents can do:
 - Make sure your child gets enough fluids
 - Encourage them to eat as much as possible
 - You can use acetaminophen and/or ibuprofen if the fever is making your child uncomfortable.
 - Saline (saltwater) nose drops and a bulb suction can be used to clean the nose, especially in infants

Bronchiolitis

- Caused by a variety of viruses not bacteria, so antibiotics are not necessary
- Affects young children (<2 years)
- Symptoms: cough, difficulty breathing, wheezing, stuffy or runny nose, fever. It is similar to the common cold, but with involvement of the small airways of the lungs
- What parents can do:
 - You can use acetaminophen and/or ibuprofen if the fever is making your child uncomfortable.
 - Make sure your child gets enough fluids
 - Encourage them to eat as much as possible

Pneumonia

- Can be caused by bacteria, therefore may require antibiotics
- Symptoms: cough, difficulty breathing, stuffy or runny nose, fever.
- This is usually diagnosed after your child is examined by a physician and has an xray of the chest done
- What parents can do:
 - See a doctor, as a chest xray is needed to make the diagnosis

- Treatment is antibiotics – make sure your child take until the end of the prescription to avoid antibiotic resistance in the futue
- You can use acetaminophen and/or ibuprofen if the fever is making your child uncomfortable.
- Make sure your child gets enough fluids.

Otitis Media (aka Ear Infection)

- Caused by a variety of viruses 80% of the time. Bacteria is only the cause about 20% of the time.
- Symptoms: earache, crankiness/fussiness, difficulty sleeping, fever, tugging at ears and sometimes other signs of a common cold
- Sometimes there can be fluid behind the ear drum for 2-3 months after an infection
- What parents can do:
 - If your child is less than 6 months old, or is prone to ear infection, you should see a doctor right away to determine antibiotics are needed
 - If your child is more than 6 months old, your doctor will likely monitor and only give antibiotics if they have high or prolonged fever or if they are unwell. This is because many of these infections will resolve on their own.
 - Get a referral to a ENT specialist if they have had more then 4 ear infections in a 1 year or have persistent fluid behind the ear drum

Strep Throat (aka Tonsillitis)

- True strep throat is caused by Streptococcus bacteria. But most sore throats, even severe ones, are due to viruses.
- Symptoms: fever, sore throat, headache, big lymph nodes. There is no cough or runny nose when you have strep throat
- What parents can do:
 - See your doctor, as a throat swab is needed to make the diagnosis (even if the tonsills look really red)
 - Treatment is antibiotics only if the throat swab is positive – make sure your child take until the end of the prescription to avoid antibiotic resistance in the futue
 - Give ibuprofen or aceteminophen if fever is making your child uncomfortable of if they seem to be in pain.
 - Offer salt water for gargling to help ease the pain.
 - Make sure your child gets enough fluids.

Croup

- Caused by a variety of viruses- most commonly Parainfluenza
- Symptoms: cold symptoms, fever, hoarse voice, barky cough that sounds like a seal. Your child might have noisy high-pitched breathing called stridor, which is worse when they are active or upset. These symptoms are usually worse at night.
- What parents can do:

- Take your child outside if it is a cold day. Cold air often improves the breathing with croup.
- You can use acetaminophen and/or ibuprofen if the fever is making your child uncomfortable.
- See a doctor, if your child has:
 - Difficulty breathing
 - Stridor is happening not just when your child is active, but also when they are calm.
 - Difficulty lying down because it's hard to breathe
 - Your child is drooling a lot

Influenza (aka The Flu)

- Caused by the Influenza virus
- Symptoms: Fever, cough, headache, muscle aches, sore throat, fatigue, loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea. It is pretty similar to the common cold, but the symptoms tend to be more severe
- What parents can do:
 - You can use acetaminophen and/or ibuprofen if the fever is making your child uncomfortable.
 - Make sure your child gets enough fluids
 - Encourage them to eat as much as possible
 - Vaccinate your child every fall for influenza once they are 6 months old or older. Nasal vaccines are often offered for kids.

Gastroenteritis (aka Stomach Flu)

- Caused by a variety of viruses. Sometimes bacteria can be the cause, especially if bloody diarrhea
- Symptoms: diarrhea, vomiting, decreased appetite, stomach cramps, blood or mucous in stool, fever
- What parents can do:
 - If your child is vomiting, then give them clear fluids only, at least until they have gone 6 hours without vomiting. The best fluid is an oral rehydration solution like Pedialyte or Pediatric Electrolyte. If your child doesn't want to drink lots, then give him small amounts of fluid through a syringe or sippy cup frequently (every 15-30 minutes).
 - Once your child isn't vomiting for 6 hours or has diarrhea without vomiting, then you can try thicker fluids like milk and small frequent feeds with foods that your child enjoys. Starting some solid food as early as possible will help
 - Juice will cause more diarrhea and contribute to dehydration
 - Give ibuprofen or acetaminophen if fever is making your child uncomfortable.
 - See your doctor if you are worried your child is dehydrated (lethargic, decreased tears and saliva, decreased urination)