

Common Illnesses in Babies and Young Children

A healthy child will:

- * look, behave and act in their usual manner
- * generally have a good appetite
- * get a their usual night's sleep
- * have plenty of energy and natural curiosity in their surroundings
- * generally act appropriately for their age



A child who is unwell may:

- * not want to eat
- * be unsettled, drowsy, or irritable when disturbed
- * cry readily and not be easily comforted
- * lose interest in playing
- * be unusually quiet and inactive
- * feel hot to touch
- * look tired and flushed
- * look pale
- * complain of feeling cold
- * have a rash (spots or blotches on the skin)
- * have dark rings around the eyes
- * have vomiting or diarrhoea



A lot of childhood illnesses are mild illnesses and will not require a doctor's visit. These are illnesses such as the common cold, sore throat, mild fever, vomiting, diarrhoea, earache, cough, flu, rash, high temperature and dehydration.

Visit the website <https://www2.hse.ie/under-the-weather/> for lots of use tips on how to manage the above illnesses.

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When to see a doctor

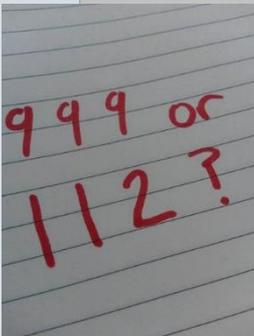
Bring your child to your GP if they have any of the following signs or symptoms:

- * A purple or red rash that does not fade or change colour when you press a glass against it.
- * The soft spot on your baby's head is sunken or raised.
- * A high temperature of more than 38°C if under 3 months of age.
- * A high temperature of more than 39°C if aged 3 months and over.
- * Your baby is not taking feeds.
- * Your child is not drinking fluids.
- * Your baby has unusually dry nappies or is having less than 4 wet nappies over a 24 hour period.
- * Your baby is vomiting most of their feeds.
- * Your child is 6 months or older and is vomiting any fluids they drink, or they have a lot of diarrhoea.
- * Vomiting with a high temperature of more than 38°C.
- * Severe tummy pain.



Call 112 or 999 for your child if you child:

- * is unconscious, especially if they had a recent fall or a head injury
- * is not breathing or turning blue around the lips or face
- * is choking
- * has taken medication, poison or a chemical substance and is now difficult to wake up
- * is having a severe allergic reaction. This could include noisy breathing or difficulty breathing
- * has a seizure for the first time
- * has been diagnosed with a seizure disorder and has a seizure lasting more than 5 minutes or has one seizure after another



Adapted from www.hse.ie

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Cold: Colds are caused by viruses. Antibiotics cannot treat viruses. Symptoms will usually last about a week.

Symptoms:

- * Sore throat
- * Sneezing
- * Blocked, sore or runny nose
- * Headaches
- * Muscle aches
- * Cough
- * A raised temperature
- * Loss of taste and smell



Treatment:

- * Give your child plenty of liquids to replace those lost from sweating and runny noses.
- * Make sure your child gets lots of rest and eat healthily.

Rashes:

Hives:

Many things can trigger hives. These can include certain foods, latex, nettles, medicines, insect bites and stings. Exercise or heat can also cause hives. But, in around half of all cases, no cause can be found. Hives are generally treated with antihistamine tablets. Ask your pharmacist for advice. You can also take paracetamol or ibuprofen if you have any pain.

If your child feels ill along with the rash, it is more likely that she have an infection. Some common infections with a rash include: chicken pox, measles, rubella

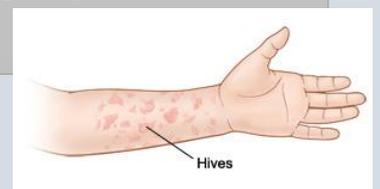
Causes of rashes in children:

A rash on your child's skin may be caused by eczema, psoriasis and nappy rash.

Treatment for rashes:

Antibiotics do not help most rashes. In fact, antibiotics often cause allergic reactions.

If your rash is caused by an allergy, you should avoid whatever is causing the problem. For example, stop eating strawberries if strawberries are causing the rash.



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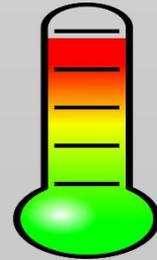
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High temperatures In children, any temperature of 38 degrees Celsius or above is considered high. High temperature is common in young children. The temperature usually returns to normal in 3 or 4 days and is usually caused by minor illnesses. There is a low risk of serious illness if your child:

- is content and smiling
- stays awake
- is taking drinks
- is responding normally to people

There is a high risk of serious illness if your child:

- cannot be woken up or if woken, does not stay awake
- has a weak or high-pitched continuous cry
- has pale or mottled (blotchy) skin
- keeps vomiting
- is grunting, if they are a baby or breathing very fast



Treatment:

- Dress your child normally. Children with high temperatures should not be either underdressed or overwrapped.
- Do not use a cool cloth or sponge to get their temperature down.
- Give your child plenty of fluids.
- Give them food if they want it.
- Check on your child regularly during the night.
- Use either paracetamol or ibuprofen to reduce your child's temperature provided you do not give more than the recommended dose for your child's weight.

Flu or (influenza) is a severe infection caused by a virus. Antibiotics do not work on flu.

Symptoms include:

- muscle aches
- high fever
- headache
- cough
- earache



Treatment:

- Stay indoors, keep warm, rest and sleep.
- Give paracetamol or ibuprofen to lower temperature and treat aches and pains.
- Give plenty of water to avoid dehydration.

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Earache is particularly common in young children.

Symptoms:

- *severe pain (caused by the pressure of mucus on the eardrum)
- *a high temperature
- *child may have a temperature of 38 degrees Celsius or above
- * child might rub or pull their ear
- * child might not react to some sounds
- * be irritable or restless
- * be off their food
- * keep losing their balance

Treatment:

- * Give your child painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen. Children under 16 should not take aspirin
- * Do not give your child antibiotics for an ear infection unless your GP prescribes them. Ear infections are generally caused by viruses and antibiotics cannot treat viruses.
- * Do not put anything inside the ear, such as cotton buds
- * Do not try to remove earwax



Cough Most coughs are caused by the common cold, the flu or bronchitis.

Symptoms:

Coughs often come with symptoms like runny nose, fever, sore throat, ear ache and general aches and pains.

Treatment:

If your child's cough is a result of a cold or the flu, you do not need to see the doctor. Antibiotics will not cure a cold or the flu.

There is no quick way to get rid of a cough. It will usually clear up after your child's immune system has defeated the bug that is causing it.

The simplest and cheapest way to ease a tickly or chesty cough is with any of the common over-the-counter remedies.

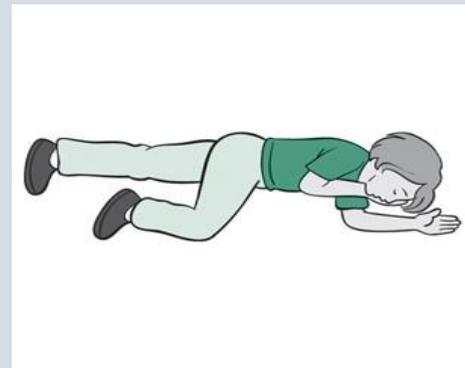
Your child should rest and drink plenty of fluids.

Adapted from www.undertheweather.ie

Common Illnesses in Babies and Young Children

Wheezing A child with wheezing should always be seen by a doctor. The wheeze may be caused by asthma, an infection or by inhaling something.

Fits (Convulsions) Fits are caused by a wide variety of ailments, but not by teething. When a child has a fit, her eyes roll upwards, she loses consciousness and her limbs make jerking movements. In many small children they are due to a high fever that occurs with infections such as tonsillitis. Once the convulsion has stopped, put the child on her side in the recovery position. Inform the doctor. If the fit continues for more than 10 minutes, or if the child remains unconscious for longer than this time, and a doctor has not visited the child, the child should be taken to hospital.



Recovery position

A medical word that ends in 'itis' indicates that there is a swelling in a part of the body. This may sometimes be due, but not always, be to infection. Below are some more of the illnesses children may encounter.

Appendicitis is an inflammation of the appendix. It starts with a pain in the tummy which moves to the lower right hand side. Usually fever and vomiting accompany the pain. An operation is necessary to remove the appendix.

Conjunctivitis is caused by an eye infection. The eye looks red and there is usually a yellowish discharge which sticks the eyelids together. The eyes can be cleaned by wiping gently with cotton wool soaked in water, from the inner corner of the eye outwards. A fresh piece of cotton wool should be used for each eye. Antibiotic eyedrops may be prescribed.

Tonsillitis is an infection of the tonsils. It can cause sore throat and the tonsils become inflamed. Antibiotics prescribed by the doctor usually cure the infection.

Adapted from Minett, P., (2010) *Child Care and Development*, 6th edition, London, Hodder Education