

Germs cause illness. Some things you can do to keep your family from spreading germs and bugs to each other are:^{1,2}

- Washing your hands.^{3,4}
- Covering your mouth and noses before coughing or sneezing.⁵
- Wiping down surfaces, door knobs, and other frequently touched places.
- Getting a flu shot.⁶
- Keeping your child away from anyone sick with a cold or flu.
- Keeping your child away from daycare until they are well.⁷

Fevers

Fevers are a symptom that your child's immune system is fighting an infection. If your child is *uncomfortable*, treat their fever with an age-appropriate pain and fever *medicine*, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol). If your child is under age two, then check with your medical provider before giving any over-the-counter medications.⁹ If your child has a fever and isn't miserable, let the fever do its job, but see your provider if there is:¹⁰

- temperature over 104 degrees
- earache
- dehydration
- sore throat
- rash

Dehydration¹¹

Dehydration occurs when your child's body loses too much water. Fluids lost from vomiting, diarrhea, or fever can quickly cause it. See your medical provider or head to the ER if you think your child may be getting dehydrated. Symptoms include:

- dizziness
- crying with few or no tears
- fewer than six wet diapers per day.

You can treat dehydration by giving your child small sips of water or ice chips frequently.⁴ If your child becomes moderately dehydrated, where they are producing fewer tears when crying and have less than four wet diapers in 24 hours, you can offer them an oral electrolyte solution in liquid or Popsicle form. Because the optimal dose is based on on your child's weight, follow instructions on the package and contact your provider for individualized advice on how to administer.

Home Remedies for Common Colds

- Use *saline* or saltwater sprays to help clear their noses.
- Give children *over* age one, a half to one teaspoon of honey as needed to reduce coughing. (Never give honey to a child *under* age one or with a honey allergy.)
- For children age *two* and over, rub a thin layer of mentholated rub on their *chest* and neck.
- Encourage your child to drink plenty of water.¹³

RSV¹⁴

RSV, respiratory syncytial virus, presents like a bad cold. But for children under age 2, or those who have a history of respiratory or immune problems, it can become serious. See your medical provider if you notice your child has:

- wheezing or trouble breathing
- gray or blue skin
- is not drinking enough or appears dehydrated
- high fever
- extreme tiredness

Flu¹⁵

The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu shot every year. The flu causes a stuffy or runny nose and cough. It also causes higher fever usually at the start of the illness, chills, body aches, and a more severe cough than from a cold. Your child should start to improve after four days, but tapering symptoms may last up to two weeks.⁴ Contact your medical provider if they complain of:

- ear pain
- have difficulty breathing
- have a lingering cough

Give your child lots of love, rest, and keep them hydrated.

Croup¹⁶

Croup starts off with cold-like symptoms that turn into a bark-like cough and sometimes odd-sounding breathing. Croup is a virus that causes the voice box and windpipe to swell. Keep your child calm by rubbing their back, singing softly to them, or by offering a comforting toy. If your child has severe symptoms such as difficulty swallowing, breathing, talking, or worse, then call your provider or go directly to the ER.

Hand, Foot, & Mouth Disease¹⁷

Hand, Foot & Mouth disease is funny-sounding illness that starts off looking like a cold. Your child will likely have a fever, sore throat, and a runny nose. Then, a rash with small blisters can crop up in the mouth, on the palms of their hands, fingers, soles of their feet, or on their buttocks. Call your medical provider if your child's fever lasts longer than three days or if they become dehydrated. Treat discomfort with age-appropriate pain and fever medicine and keep them rested and hydrated.

Ear Infections¹⁸

Some ways to help prevent ear infections:¹⁹

- Limit your child's exposure to germs and illness.
- Get a flu shot.
- Keep hands clean.
- Don't smoke around your child.
- Don't give your child a bottle when putting them down to sleep.⁴

Gastroenteritis^{20,21}

Gastroenteritis is also called the stomach flu. Keeping your child hydrated is super important when they have a stomach bug. Just remember to start with small sips of water or ice chips and build up slowly over several hours as tolerated. Too much fluid given too quickly can result in more vomiting. Most stomach bugs run their course in about 24 hours, sometimes a little longer. See your medical provider if your child becomes or appears dehydrated or if the vomiting worsens after 24 hours. You should also see your provider if your child can't hold down fluids, has severe abdominal pain, high fevers, is listless, or has other concerning symptoms.⁴

Constipation

Your toddler is likely constipated if they have stools that are hard, dry, and difficult to pass, and if their bowel patterns become irregular. *Encourage your child to drink plenty of water and feed them high-fiber foods such as fruits, cooked veggies, beans, and whole grains. Keeping them active will help too.* If your child continues to have a problem, then see your provider.

Rashes

If your child develops a rash or skin condition, you should see your medical provider for a correct diagnosis and treatment. Common rashes include:²²

- **Impetigo** causes a rash of fluid-filled blisters or crusty yellow scabs. Cover the infected area loosely to prevent spreading the infection to others and to keep your child from scratching it.

- **Diaper rash** is typically caused by leaving soiled diapers on your child too long. Make sure you change diapers more often, wash their bottom with soap and water at least daily, and use a diaper cream to protect your child's delicate skin.
- **Eczema** is a condition where the skin develops itchy, dry, and inflamed patches. They are typically treated with topical steroids during an outbreak, emollients like Petroleum Jelly, creams, and oils to hydrate their skin, and are asked to avoid fragrances and dyes that can irritate their skin.⁴

Sunburns²³

No matter their skin tone, every child is at risk for sunburn, though fair-skinned children are at greater risk. Protect your child by using sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 applied 15 to 30 minutes before going outdoors. Have your child wear a wide-brimmed hat when you can and apply sunscreen even on cloudy days. Your child will feel the greatest discomfort during the first 24 hours after a burn. During this time, apply cool compresses to the burn or bathe your child in cool water. Give an age-appropriate pain reliever for discomfort. See your medical provider if the burn causes blisters, fever, chills, headache, or a general feeling of illness.

Urinary Tract Infections (UTIs)

Urinary tract infections are common in toddlers. Symptoms include a high, unexplained fever, pain or burning during urination, an urge to urinate more frequently, or foul-smelling, cloudy, or bloody urine. Call your provider right away. UTIs are treated with antibiotics.²⁶ Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids.²⁷

Resources include:

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