

# YOUR CHILD'S HEALTH

## HELP KEEP SICK DAYS TO A MINIMUM

It's no wonder children seem to be sick quite often. Their little hands touch everything and easily pick up and spread germs. Because children's immune systems are still developing, they can't fight off infections as effectively as adults.

To help keep your child healthy, get to know these three common childhood illnesses.

### 1. THE COMMON COLD

A cold's symptoms typically include feeling tired, sneezing, coughing, a runny nose or congestion, low-grade fever, mild muscle aches, scratchy or sore throat, watery eyes and headache. To treat a child's cold, talk with your doctor before using over-the-counter cough and cold products. The Food and Drug Administration recently recommended that these products not be used with babies and children younger than 2 years of age because they could cause life-threatening side effects.

Acetaminophen or ibuprofen may help alleviate a fever. Do not give aspirin to children younger than 19 years old; it may trigger Reye's syndrome, a rare but potentially fatal disease.

**Your child may feel better by:**

**Resting.** Keep your child home, especially if he or she has a fever.

**Drinking plenty of fluids,** such as water, fruit juice and clear soup.

**Gargling** with salt water a few times a day to relieve a sore throat.

**Avoiding second-hand smoke,** which can make cold symptoms worse.

**Using saline** (salt water) nose drops to help loosen mucus and moisten the tender skin in the nose.

Call the doctor at the first sign of illness if your child is younger than 3 months old or if your child has:

- Fever of 103° F or higher or a temperature higher than 100° F that lasts more than three days
- Chills or sweating
- Difficulty breathing
- Vomiting or abdominal pain
- Severe headache
- Persistent cough



For additional children's health information or to learn more about our pediatric team, VISIT US AT [UWHPWATERTOWN.COM/PEDIATRICS](http://UWHPWATERTOWN.COM/PEDIATRICS).

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### 2. EAR INFECTION

While ear infections aren't contagious, catching a cold may lead to ear infections. Babies between 6 and 18 months old are the most susceptible. Children usually stop having ear infections once they reach school age.

The most common symptom is ear pain. Children younger than age 2 with an ear infection may be sleepless and irritable after an upper respiratory infection, such as a cold. Other symptoms include loss of appetite, fever, ear drainage or trouble hearing.

Experts estimate that about 80% of children with ear infections recover without antibiotics.\* For this reason,

parents are generally advised to take a wait-and-see approach for babies and children older than 6 months before prescribing antibiotics.

You can help reduce your child's pain and/or fever with acetaminophen or ibuprofen, or your child's doctor may prescribe eardrops. Applying a warm, moist cloth to your child's ear may also provide relief.

Breastfeeding until your baby is at least 6 months old, holding your infant at an angle while bottle-feeding and avoiding secondhand smoke can help prevent ear infections.

### 3. STREP THROAT

Strep throat is a bacterial infection that's most common in children between the ages of 5 and 15 years. Infants and toddlers may have a low fever; thickened, bloody nasal discharge; and swollen neck glands. Children older than age 3 often become more ill, with symptoms including extremely painful throat and fever over 102° F.

In addition to throat cultures, most pediatric offices now do quick-result strep tests to diagnose strep throat within minutes. If the strep test is positive, your doctor will prescribe an antibiotic. Be sure that your child takes all of the medicine, even if he or she is feeling better. Otherwise, the infection may worsen or spread to other parts of the body, causing more serious problems

such as ear and sinus infections. Left untreated, a strep infection can lead to rheumatic fever, a disease that affects the joints and heart, or nephritis, a kidney infection.

Call your doctor if your child has any of these symptoms:

- Sore throat with tender, swollen lymph glands or that lasts longer than 48 hours
- Fever higher than 103° F in older children or that lasts longer than 48 hours
- Rash
- Joint pain
- Problems breathing or difficulty swallowing

### STAYING HEALTHY

The best way to prevent a viral or bacterial infection is to wash hands frequently with soap and warm water. Be sure your child washes his or her hands after going to the bathroom. Also, teach your child to sneeze and

cough into a paper tissue, throwing it away immediately, and to limit touching his or her mouth, nose and eyes. For more information, visit the American Academy of Pediatrics Web site at [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org).

*\*Source: American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy of Family Physicians.*

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