

Just for Parents: Your Kids' Health

Most Important Health Tips for Kids

- The most important thing that you and your kids can do to help keep from getting sick is to **wash your hands**, especially after coughing and sneezing, before preparing foods or eating, and after using the restroom. By washing your hands often, you wash away germs that you have picked up from other people, from contaminated surfaces, or from animals and animal waste.



- Cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.** If you can't reach a tissue in time, cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- Keep your hands away from your eyes and out of your mouth.** Hands are often covered in germs.

- Don't share water bottles, food or other personal items.** If you put the item in your mouth, keep it to yourself.
- Stay away from friends that are sick or could still be contagious.**

Cold and Flu

The common cold, including chest cold and head cold, and seasonal flu are caused by viruses. Use over-the-counter cold medications to relieve symptoms including sore throat, runny nose, congestion, and cough. Flu symptoms are similar, but include fever, headache and muscle soreness.



Is it the Flu or a Cold or an Allergy?

Symptom	Flu	Cold	Allergy
Fever	High	None or mild	None or mild
Cough	Usually	Usually	Sometimes
Fatigue	Severe	Mild	None or mild
Aches and pains	Yes	No	No
Appetite	Decreased	Sometimes decreased	Normal
Chills	Yes	No	No

Reminders for Staying Healthy

An unhealthy diet and not getting enough sleep may affect the immune system and lower a child's resistance to illnesses.

- Poor nutrition and not getting good rest can weaken the immune system.
- Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables can help prevent health problems.
- Drinking water helps prevent dehydration and helps flush out the body.
- Sleep is important to maintaining your child's health. Sleep is the body's time to repair and rejuvenate itself.



When to Stay Home from School or See a Doctor

Never send a child to school who has a fever, is nauseated, vomiting, or has diarrhea. Kids who lose their appetite, complain of pain, or who just don't seem to be acting like themselves should also take a sick day.

Some diseases, like strep throat or pneumonia, also can look like the flu or a cold. It's important to get medical attention immediately if your child seems to be getting worse, is having any trouble breathing, has a high fever (greater than 102°), has a bad headache, has a sore throat, or seems confused.

SEE BACK FOR MORE INFORMATION

Just for Parents: Your Kids' Health

Gastroenteritis

Gastroenteritis (stomach pain) is caused by a virus and usually triggers symptoms such as diarrhea, vomiting, fever and stomach pain. It is an infectious disease that spreads from person to person. Do not send your child to school with diarrhea, fever or vomiting.

- **Infectious period:** The time during which a sick person can give the illness to others is slightly different for each virus.
- **Treatment:** If your child experiences frequent stools or vomiting, you should seek medical advice.
- **Replace the fluids** which are lost due to frequent stools with oral rehydration liquids, as kids are more prone to dehydration.

Whooping Cough

- **Symptoms of whooping cough** include fever, continuous coughing, wheezy breathing and nasal discharge.



- **Infectious period:** This infection is more contagious in first week of exposure to bacteria with severe cold. The irritated cough can continue up to three months, but the disease wears off within seven weeks. The diseased child should be kept away from other children.
- **Treatment:** A child with whooping cough should be given very light food due to risk of vomiting. A complete five-day antibiotic treatment is effective for full recovery.

Strep Throat

If your child is feeling fine one moment—and then suddenly their throat really hurts, they're running a high fever, and all their energy has vanished in a haze of illness—they may have strep throat.

While colds and flu normally take several days to develop, they are caused by viruses and are usually accompanied by a cough, stuffy or runny nose, and headache, and they go away on their own within five to seven days.

Strep throat, by contrast, usually arrives in a hurry, without any other cold or flu symptoms and should be treated with antibiotics to prevent more serious disease and stop its spread to others. It is advised to take your child to a doctor.

Ear Infections

Ear infections occur when a cold, throat infection or allergy attack causes fluid to become trapped in the middle ear. Mostly affecting children, symptoms may include earaches and thick, yellow fluid coming from the ears.



- **Symptoms:** Fever, reduced hearing, earache and tinnitus. Fluid discharge from ear drum is also a common symptom.
- Many times, kids will start **tugging or pulling on an ear**. Little kids can also just get cranky, have trouble sleeping, or not eat well.
- **Infectious period:** It may or may not infect other people in contact with the infected person.
- **Treatment:** If your child notices ear discharge, seek a doctor's advice. He may suggest some antibiotics.
- **Home care treatment:** Applying a warm washcloth on the outside of the ear can be soothing. Ear drops can give quick relief, but check with your doctor before using them. Non-prescription painkillers and fever reducers, such as ibuprofen and acetaminophen, are also an option. **DO NOT** give aspirin to children.

Pinkeye

Pinkeye (also called conjunctivitis) is common in children. It usually is not serious and goes away in 7 to 10 days without medical treatment.

Pinkeye symptoms may include:

- Redness in the white of the eye
- Swelling of the eyelids
- Itching or burning feeling of the eyelids
- Swollen and tender areas in front of the ears
- A lot of tearing
- Clear or slightly thick, whitish drainage

Viral and bacterial pinkeye are **contagious and spread very easily**. Since most pinkeye is caused by viruses for which there is usually no medical treatment, preventing its spread is important.

Poor hand washing is the main cause of the spread of pinkeye. Sharing an object, such as a washcloth or towel, with a person who has pinkeye can spread the infection.