

# What to do if your child is unwell

## A guide for parents

### Newborn babies

#### Crying

All babies cry. It's their way of letting you know they need changing, are hungry or just need a cuddle. If your baby cries suddenly, they may have colic. Colic is common but is not serious and will lessen over time. Talk to your pharmacist for advice.

If your baby suddenly develops a high pitched cry, contact your GP or call NHS 111.

#### Wheezing and breathing difficulties

These can be scary but are often nothing to worry about. Illnesses like bronchiolitis, mild croup and a cough can often be treated at home. Panting or rattly breathing is common in babies and can be helped by holding your baby upright. Talk to your health visitor about this. If you are worried contact your GP or call NHS 111.

#### Rashes and dry skin

It's normal for babies to develop rashes, and problems such as nappy rash can be helped with creams from your local pharmacist. If your baby develops a rash and seems unwell contact your GP or call NHS 111.

### What to have in your first aid kit

- Liquid paracetamol or ibuprofen.
- A digital thermometer (not a forehead thermometer) – always test your child's temperature before contacting or visiting a health professional.
- Antiseptic cream and plasters.
- Oral rehydration solution suitable for your child's age.
- Your pharmacist can help with all of these.

### Babies, toddlers and young children

#### High temperature (fever)

A high temperature (fever) is very common in young children and can usually be treated at home. A high temperature is the body's natural response to fighting infections like coughs and colds and will usually return to normal within 3 or 4 days. Use a digital thermometer, which you can buy from pharmacies and supermarkets, to take your child's temperature. A high temperature is 38°C or more.

Contact your GP or call NHS 111 if your child's temperature stays above 38°C for more than 5 days, if it cannot be controlled with medication like liquid paracetamol, or if they seem unusually unwell.

#### Coughs and colds

Coughs and colds are part of normal child development and helps them to build up their immune system. An average child will have between 8-12 viral infections each year.

Most bugs will run their course and your child will get better on their own but you can help them:

- Give your child lots to drink
- Try liquid paracetamol or liquid ibuprofen suitable for children. Children with asthma may not be able to take ibuprofen, so check with a pharmacist.

Talk to your pharmacist about other remedies.

Contact your GP or call NHS 111 if your child's temperature stays above 38°C and cannot be controlled with medication or is unusually unwell.

#### Ear infection

Ear infections are common in very young children. They often follow a cold and can cause a temperature. They are painful and you may need painkillers from your pharmacist.

Other symptoms include a sore throat, coughing and a high temperature. If the pain becomes more severe or your child has breathing difficulties, contact your GP or call NHS 111.

#### Upset tummy

Feeling and being sick are normally signs of an upset stomach or tummy bug, followed by diarrhoea.

Keep your child at home and, if they are not vomiting too often, give them frequent, small amounts of water (e.g. a couple of tablespoons full every 10 minutes), to stop them becoming dehydrated. Rehydration solutions can also help and can be bought at your local pharmacy.

#### Bumps and bruises

Minor cuts, bumps and bruises are normal. Most of your child's bumps will require nothing more than a cuddle but you will know by their reaction if it's more serious. A cold flannel or a covered ice pack on the spot for a few minutes will help reduce swelling and cool it down.

If your child has a bump to the head and it looks serious, or symptoms worsen, contact your GP or call NHS 111.



## Self care

For coughs and cold, sore throats, grazed knees and elbows and mild tummy aches.

Lots of conditions can be treated at home – in fact that's the best place for your child.

A major part of helping your child to recover from minor illness is to get them to rest and drink plenty of fluids. Plan ahead by stocking up on essentials, including liquid paracetamol or ibuprofen, a thermometer, antiseptic cream and plasters. Do not give aspirin to a child under 16.



## Pharmacists

For diarrhoea, constipation, skin irritations and mild fever.

Many of your child's medical problems can be treated by health professionals at your local pharmacy. Pharmacists give expert, confidential advice and treatment. Best of all there is no need for an appointment.

There are certain conditions, like earache and sore throats, that community pharmacy can treat and provide prescription medicines for, without your child needing to see a GP.



## GP

Your GP is the first port of call for your child for non-urgent illnesses and injuries that won't go away. This may include high temperatures, persistent coughs and ear aches, eczema, severe tummy aches, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Some GPs are open longer hours, including weekends and evenings and they can offer emergency appointments for urgent cases.

If you cannot make an appointment during regular GP surgery hours (usually 8am – 6.30pm Monday – Friday), contact NHS 111 to book an out-of-hours appointment. Many GPs offer online services, which allow you to book or cancel your appointment or order a repeat prescription. Contact your practice or visit [www.northeastlondon.icb.nhs.uk/GP](http://www.northeastlondon.icb.nhs.uk/GP) for more information.



## NHS 111

If you are not sure how to deal with your child's medical condition call **NHS 111**.

You can get free round-the-clock medical information, confidential advice and reassurance.

Health advisors will ask you questions and give advice on what to do and where to go next.

NHS 111 can book you a GP appointment outside of usual opening hours.



## Dental care

If you have concerns about your child's teeth, including dental pain, contact a dentist. NHS 111 can help you find your nearest dentist or the nearest emergency dental service.



## A&E

Hospital A&E provides urgent treatment for serious, life-threatening conditions. This could include if your child is blacking out, suspected meningitis, choking, fitting, struggling to breathe, and has an injury that is bleeding and won't stop.

You should take your child to A&E yourself if possible but if your child is too unwell, dial 999 for an ambulance.



## Please contact your GP or call NHS 111 if your child has any of the following:

- Is finding it hard to breathe
- Seems dehydrated (sunken eyes, drowsy or not passed urine for 12 hours)
- Is drowsy (excessively sleepy) or irritable (unable to settle them with toys, TV, food or picking up)
- Has extreme shivering or complains of muscle pain
- Has had chickenpox in the past few days and is now getting more unwell
- Swelling of a limb or joint
- Too painful for your child to stand or is complaining of severe pain that is not improving with painkillers
- Has a swollen eye
- Is 3-6 months of age with a temperature of 39.0°C or above
- Continues to have a fever of 38.0°C or more for more than 5 days
- Is getting worse or if you are worried

## Go to the nearest hospital Emergency (A&E) Department or phone 999 if your child has any of the following:

- Is pale, mottled and feels abnormally cold to touch
- Has blue lips
- Severe breathing difficulty (too breathless to talk or eat/drink)
- Has a fit or seizure
- Is extremely agitated (crying inconsolably despite distraction), confused or very lethargic (difficult to wake)
- Has a rash that does not disappear when you push a glass against it
- Has a stiff neck or is bothered by light
- Is under 3 months of age with a temperature of 38.0°C or above

## Find your route to urgent help

Find out more on the best way to access NHS services like pharmacy, GPs and NHS 111  
[www.northeastlondon.icb.nhs.uk/urgentcare](http://www.northeastlondon.icb.nhs.uk/urgentcare)

