



WARNING SIGNS

These warning signs may tell you something is wrong and that you should contact your GP as soon as possible:

- Losing weight by at least 7 pounds (3 kilograms) or more without any obvious reason.
- Feeling thirsty without obvious reason.
- Feeling very tired or exhausted without good reason.
- Loosing blood when coughing or vomiting or going to the toilet.
- Breathing difficulties, gulping, gasping, wheezing and being unable to speak or drink.
- Pain (crushing) in chest not relieved by rest which may radiate to arms and neck.
- A change in mole (changing colour, getting bigger or thicker, itching or bleeding).
- A change in your voice (getting husky or hoarse and continuing that way for more than three weeks).
- Indigestion or belching acid, lasting more than a month (especially it over 45 years old).
- A change in a breast or nipple.
- Increase frequency in urination, going more often than usual, especially during the night, poor urinary flow and feeling of non-emptying of urinary bladder.

DANGER SIGNS IN CHILDREN

- Violet coloured spots that do not fade when pressed.
- Breathing difficulties, gulping, gasping, wheezing and being unable to speak or drink.
- The child seems to be in pain when breathing in (inhaling)
- The child is weak, drowsy or confused and does not react to you or its surroundings.
- The child is vomiting a lot and seems ill.
- The child cannot sit up or bend the head forward.

SELF TREATMENT OF MINOR ILLNESSES & ACCIDENTS

We hope you will find this information helpful. It explains simple treatments for minor illnesses and accidents, which are likely to occur in every family from time to time, and will help you cope with these at home without the need to consult a doctor.

BACK PAIN

Back pain is very common and most people will experience it at some time in their lives. Most episodes of pain will settle within a few weeks without complicated treatment. If you get a sudden severe back pain, rest on a firm mattress. If your mattress is soft put a board under it or lay it on the floor. Take regular painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen, available from your chemist. Gentle heat to the area with a well padded hot water bottle may help. If these simple remedies do not help your back to improve over a few days, or you are having frequent episodes, then consult your doctor. It is important to learn back strengthening exercises and how to lift correctly.

BRUISES

These are common in children. A cold compress applied quickly may ease the discomfort, a simple painkiller like paracetamol will also help.

BURNS AND SCALDS

Apply large quantities of cold water until the pain subsides, this may take up to 15 minutes. The skin may become blistered. Do not burst blisters but keep the skin clean and dry. If the injury is more than a few inches across you should seek advice.

CHICKENPOX

This is a common childhood illness. The rash starts on the body and face as red blotches, in which develop small fluid filled blisters. The blisters turn to scabs and drop off after about a week. Calamine lotion helps with the itch and paracetamol syrup, given regularly eases a child's fever and discomfort. Children are no longer infectious one week after the last spot appears.

COLDS AND COUGHS

Unfortunately there is still no cure for the common cold. Antibiotics are not effective against the viruses that cause illness and may themselves lead to troublesome side effects. You will feel most comfortable if you rest, drink plenty of fluids and take paracetamol regularly. A cough linctus from your chemist will help and steamy inhalations are soothing, particularly if you are very congested. You should consult your doctor if you are not improving after seven days, if you are short of breath, have chest pain or if your cough produces a lot of phlegm or blood.

CONJUNCTIVITIS

This is not unusual, especially in children. It is due to a superficial infection in the eye. It causes pinkness and a feeling of grittiness, together with yellow

discharge. Infected eyes are often sticky in the mornings. You should clean any discharge away with moist cotton wool. Treatment usually requires a course of antibiotic drops from your doctor.



CUTS AND GRAZES

Wash the area thoroughly with antiseptic solution. To stop bleeding apply pressure for five to ten minutes with a clean handkerchief. Apply a plaster dressing bringing the edges of the cut together. Keep it dry for two days. If the cut is deep and the edges cannot be pulled together, it may need to be stitched. Consult the hospital casualty department. A tetanus booster may be needed if you have not had one for more than ten years.

CYSTITIS

This is a urine infection and is common, particularly in women. It usually causes a burning pain when passing urine. You should drink plenty of fluids and take paracetamol. If you are unwell, have a fever, or your symptoms do not settle within 24 hours, you should consult your doctor.

DIARRHOEA AND VOMITING

Diarrhoea in adults is unpleasant but rarely dangerous. Many attacks are caused by viruses. Diarrhoea is often accompanied by cramp like tummy pain and may be preceded by vomiting. Most attacks start to get better within 48 hours. It is best not to bother with food but to drink lots of water or water based drinks such as squash. Paracetamol will help the pain and fever. You should consult your doctor if your symptoms do not improve over a day or two, if the tummy pain is continuous or if you have recently been abroad. Diarrhoea in children and babies should be monitored carefully but needs similar treatment. Milk and solid food is best avoided initially and lots of water based drinks should be encouraged, little and often. Paracetamol syrup will ease discomfort. Special drinks can be bought from a chemist (Dioralyte/Rehidrat). If a baby or child seems particularly listless consult your doctor.

EARACHE

Earache may be due to excess wax, catarrh or infection. Children are particularly prone to ear infections, which often develop during colds. A child with earache should be given paracetamol syrup and/or ibuprofen syrup for their pain and a well padded warm hot water bottle held against the ear will also help. Antibiotics may be necessary but unfortunately do not help a child's immediate distress. If an earache persists more than a few hours, make arrangements to be seen in the next available surgery.

FEVERISH CHILDREN

A child develops a temperature in response to an infection, often a virus such as a cold. Your child will feel hot and appear unwell. They should be encouraged to rest, drink plenty and you should give them paracetamol syrup regularly. Do not worry if they do not want to eat. You should not overheat a child with a

temperature and they should be nursed in a warm room with light clothing and covers. A temperature may settle quickly but if you are worried you should consult your doctor. If your child needs to be seen you will not harm them by bringing them to the surgery in a pram or car.

FLU' (INFLUENZA)

'Flu' is a common infection due to a virus. It causes a fever and you will feel hot and cold, weak, and ache in muscles and joints. There may be a sore throat, headache and 'coldlike' symptoms. Sadly, antibiotics do not cure 'flu'. It is best to rest, drink plenty and take regular paracetamol. Most people begin to recover over a week to ten days. Some people are particularly vulnerable to 'flu', especially the elderly, and those with heart, kidney, chest disease or diabetes. Such people should consider a 'flu' vaccination in the autumn.

GERMAN MEASLES (RUBELLA)

This is a viral illness that causes a pale pink rash that covers the body. The child usually feels only a little unwell and may occasionally have aching joints. The only danger is to unborn babies in the first few months of pregnancy. Most pregnant women have been immunised in childhood against German Measles and this protects their baby. It is sensible, however, to let visitors know if German Measles is in the household. If you are pregnant, are not sure if you have been immunised and think you may have been in contact with German Measles, you should discuss it with your doctor.

HAY FEVER

This can be troublesome when the pollen count is high. Itchy eyes, sneezing and a runny nose can be helped by antihistamine tablets, which are available without prescription from your chemist. If symptoms are persistent, consult your doctor.

HEAD LICE

These are a very frequent problem, especially amongst children. Contrary to popular belief, they prefer clean hair and are not a sign of poor personal hygiene. Medicated head lotion is available from chemists but only those with live lice should be treated according to the instruction leaflet. Regular combing with a *Nit Comb* will remove eggs and prevent re-infestation.

INSECT STINGS

These are painful but not usually serious. A cold compress will reduce swelling, calamine lotion will soothe and paracetamol will help with pain. The occasional person will react badly to insect stings and in these cases it is wise to contact your doctor.



MEASLES

This is now much less common than in the past, as a result of widespread immunisation. Children should be immunised (MMR) when they are 15 months old and 4½ years. Children are very unwell, with cold symptoms and a fever. The red, blotchy rash appears after three or four days, initially on the chest and back. Treatment is rest, lots to drink and paracetamol mixture. If your child is particularly unwell, consult your doctor.

MUMPS

This causes swelling of the glands just below and in front of the ears, making the face looked puffed out. Children are infectious for ten days from the onset of swelling. They may not be particularly unwell but plenty to drink and paracetamol will ease discomfort.

NAPPY RASH

Most babies on some occasion suffer nappy rash. It develops as red blotches on the baby's bottom, which can become angry and sore. Nappy rash is best prevented by frequent nappy changes and using a barrier cream such as zinc and castor oil with every change. If the rash does not heal quickly, you should consult your health visitor or doctor.

NOSE BLEEDS

Sit in a chair (lean forward with your mouth open) and pinch your nose just below the bone for approximately 10 minutes, by which time the bleeding should have stopped. In addition sucking ice is helpful. If symptoms persist, consult your doctor.

POISONING

It is important to keep all medicines and noxious substances out of the reach of children, ideally in a locked cabinet. In the case of accidental poisoning you should take your child immediately to the hospital casualty department, together with the medicine, tablets or other substance your child may have taken.

PYREXIA (RAISED TEMPERATURE)

A raised body temperature often occurs even with mild infections like colds and 'flu (influenza). Normal body temperature is 37°C or 98.4°F. People usually know or are aware if they have a raised temperature. They feel hot or cold, sweaty or shivery and unwell. Children may be miserable and listless and look flushed. Small babies may seem very sleepy and not wanting to feed.

A raised or high temperature or fever means that the body is fighting the infection. Help it along by drinking plenty of water or weak squash. Keep the room at a comfortable temperature with fresh air freely circulating. Sponge the body with cool or lukewarm water, pat dry or allow to dry naturally. Repeat as required to reduce body temperature. Paracetamol or aspirin tablets may be taken by adults and Paracetamol syrup may be given to children. If unsure, check with your doctor, practice nurse, pharmacist or NHS24.

Note: Contact your GP or NHS24 immediately if the person has a body temperature of over 40°C or 104°F, if there is a stiff neck, cramps or vomiting, or if a child seems weak and listless or suffers a fit or convulsion.

SORE THROAT

Unfortunately most sore throats are due to viruses and therefore do not respond to antibiotics. Usually sore throats will begin to improve over four or five days. In adults soluble aspirin gargled, then swallowed regularly, together with drinking plenty of fluids such as squash, will help. In children under 12 years paracetamol taken regularly is helpful. If your sore throat, however, is getting progressively worse after 48 hours, it is wise to see your doctor.

THREADWORMS

These are tiny, white, thread-like worms who live in the bowel. They particularly affect children and they can be a nuisance, but are not harmful. They often cause itching around the back passage, especially at night and sometimes can be seen in the motion. Threadworms can be easily treated with medicines available from the chemist. You should treat all members of the household and everyone should be careful to wash their hands properly after going to the toilet.



THRUSH

This is an infection that affects many women at some time in their lives. It is more common in women who are pregnant, on the pill, diabetic or on antibiotics. Some women suffer repeated attacks. It causes intense itching and a thick white vaginal discharge. There may be soreness and pain on passing urine. Thrush is caused by a yeast infection and will usually respond rapidly to cream or pessaries available from a chemist or your doctor. The likelihood of repeated infection can be reduced by avoiding tights, nylon underwear and close fitting jeans.

TOOTHACHE

Take regular painkillers such as paracetamol and consult your dentist promptly. He should be able to see you reasonably quickly. There should be an emergency service available at all times.

WARTS/VERRUCAE

These are due to be raised, thickened skin caused by a virus. They are common on the hands and feet. Warts will eventually get better without treatment as the body fights off the virus. For troublesome warts, various paints and applications are available from chemists, which must be used regularly according to the instructions if they are to be effective. If you have a particularly stubborn wart, consult your doctor who can arrange to freeze it at the surgery.