

# What to do if your child is unwell

## A guide for parents

NHS

### Scarlet fever and invasive Group A strep

**Scarlet fever** is usually a mild illness. Symptoms include a sore throat, headache, swollen neck glands, and fever, along with a fine, pinkish or red body rash with a sandpapery feel. The rash may be harder to see on darker skin tones but you should be able to feel it. Contact your GP or NHS 111 if you think your child has scarlet fever.

In very rare occasions the bacteria that causes scarlet fever can get into the bloodstream and cause an illness called **invasive Group A strep**. If your child seems seriously unwell contact your GP or call NHS 111. Do this if your child is feeding or eating much less than normal, has a dry nappy for 12 hours or more or seems dehydrated, feels hotter than usual (for a baby under 3 months a temperature of 38°C, for older than 3 months a temperature of 39°C or higher) or is very tired and irritable.

**Call 999 or go to A&E if your child is having difficulty breathing, there are pauses when your child breathes, your child's skin, tongue or lips are blue or your child is floppy and will not wake up or stay awake.**

Visit [www.what0-18.nhs.uk](http://www.what0-18.nhs.uk) for more information.



### What to have in your first aid kit

- Liquid paracetamol or ibuprofen.
- A 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.

## 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.

## Babies and toddlers

### 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

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.

## 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.

**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)

Visit [www.what0-18.nhs.uk](http://www.what0-18.nhs.uk) for information and support on child health.