

hearing, but their hearing usually returns to normal after the fluid is gone in a week or so. Your doctor will talk to you about your child's symptoms and he or she will look into your child's ears. You can treat your child at home with an over-the-counter pain reliever like acetaminophen (such as Tylenol), a warm washcloth or heating pad on the ear, and rest. **Do not give aspirin to anyone younger than 20.** Your doctor may give you eardrops that can help your child's pain. Your doctor can give antibiotics, but ear infections often get better without them. Whether you use them will depend on how old your child is and how bad the infection is. Minor surgery to put tubes in the ears may help if your child has hearing problems or has ear infections very often. To prevent ear infections, do not smoke around your child. Even the fumes from tobacco smoke on your hair and clothes can affect children. Also, make sure your child does not go to sleep while sucking on a bottle.

- **Bladder Infections (UTIs)**

A urinary tract infection (UTI) is a bacterial infection of the bladder, kidneys, ureters, or urethra, the organs and tubes that make up the urinary tract. They are more common in girls than boys due to simple anatomy. UTIs in children usually clear up quickly if they receive early treatment. The biggest danger is that they can cause permanent kidney damage and scarring if not treated. UTIs in children are usually caused by bacteria from feces, which is why good hygiene is important in preventing UTIs. Common symptoms include pain or burning during urination, urge to pee often, fever, irritability and foul-smelling urine. UTIs are treated with antibiotics prescribed by a physician and the whole course of pills must be taken. In addition, fluids are helpful to help them fight the infection.

Other:

- **Rash**

Healthy skin is a barrier between the inside of the body and the outside environment, so a rash means some change has affected the skin. It is usually a minor problem or is part of an illness that will go away on its own. A rash may be caused by contact with a substance outside the body, such as poison ivy or by other, more serious illnesses, such as measles or scarlet fever (strep throat with rash). Generalized rashes over the whole body that are caused by viruses are more common in babies and young children than in adults. Rashes may also be caused by a viral illness if the child also has a cold, a cough, or diarrhea. Most rashes caused by viruses are not serious and usually go away over a few days to a week. Once a child has had a rash caused by a virus, his or her body generally builds immunity to that virus which will protect the child from getting that specific viral illness and rash again. Sometimes rashes are also allergic reactions to food, medicines, plants, dust, etc. A very rare and serious type of generalized red rash is toxic epidermal necrolysis (TEN). This may cause the skin to peel away, leaving large areas of tissue that weep or ooze fluid like a severe burn. If this type of rash occurs, visit a doctor.

Resources

Harborview Family Medicine Clinic
206-731-8274.

<http://kids.sutterhealth.org/health/commonillness.html>

http://www.kidshealth.org/parent/infections/lung/strep_throat.html

Al-Shifa Clinic

Email: alshifa@u.washington.edu
Website: <http://students.washington.edu/alshifa>

Common Childhood Illnesses

Caring for your young one



Why do kids get sick so often?

The immune systems of children are not fully developed, so they are especially prone to certain viruses and illness. Most of these are just usual parts of growing up and are not dangerous, but some require medical attention and can be more serious. This pamphlet is just a guide to helping recognize some common childhood illnesses and tips on how to take care of them. Hand washing and good hygiene can decrease your child's chances of acquiring infectious disease.



Respiratory Problems:

- **Colds (URIs)**

The upper respiratory system includes the nose, ears, sinuses, and throat. A child with an upper respiratory infection (URI) may feel uncomfortable and sound very congested, have a stuffy nose, cough or fever. The lower respiratory system includes the bronchial tubes and lungs. Respiratory problems are less common in the lower respiratory system, are usually more severe and often require a visit to the doctor. Symptoms include shallow coughing, fever, and difficulty breathing- a child may wheeze and breathe rapidly. Viral infections cause most upper respiratory infections. Sore throats, colds, croup, and influenza (flu) are common viral illnesses in babies and older children. These infections are usually mild and go away in 4 to 10 days, but they can sometimes be persistent and more serious. If an infection persists or is accompanied by thick phlegm (green mucous discharge from the throat), its origin may be bacterial and antibiotics may be needed. Allergies can also cause cold-like symptoms.

Infections:

- **Strep Throat**

Strep throat is an infection caused by group A *streptococcus* bacteria, and it is common among kids and teens. Symptoms include fever, swollen glands, tonsils with and drainage, and stomach pain. Strep throat usually requires treatment with antibiotics. Not all sore throats are strep throats. If your child has strep throat, he or she will start to develop other symptoms within about 3 days. Those symptoms can include: red and white patches in the throat, difficulty swallowing, tender or swollen glands (lymph nodes) in the neck, red and enlarged tonsils, headache, lower stomach pain, fever, general discomfort, loss of appetite and nausea and rash. If your child's throat is sore and he or she has other strep throat symptoms, it's a good idea to see the doctor. In most cases, doctors prescribe about 10 days of antibiotic medication to treat strep throat. If your child is not treated for strep throat, he or she is most infectious when the symptoms are the most severe but could remain contagious for up to 21 days. Lack of treatment - or not finishing the antibiotics - could put your child at risk for other health problems, such as rheumatic fever (which can cause permanent damage to the heart), scarlet fever, blood infections, or kidney disease.

- **Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis)**

This is redness and swelling of the conjunctiva, the mucous membrane that lines the eyelid and eye surface. Pinkeye is very common and is mostly viral in nature. It usually is not serious and goes away in 7 to 10 days without medical treatment. Common symptoms of pinkeye are redness, swelling and drainage from the eye. Poor hand-washing is the main cause of the spread of pinkeye. Sharing things, such as a washcloth or towel, with a person who has pinkeye can spread the infection. People with infectious pinkeye should not attend school or go to work until symptoms improve.

- **Tonsillitis**

Tonsillitis is an infection or inflammation of the

tonsils, balls of lymphatic tissue on either side of the throat, above and behind the tongue, that are part of the immune system. Most often, tonsillitis is caused by a virus, though it's rarely caused by a bacterium, such as the one that also causes strep throat. The main symptom of tonsillitis is a sore throat, which looks red and swollen along with the tonsils. The tonsils may have spots on them or pus that covers them in patches or entirely. Fever is also common. When the sore throat is accompanied by a sudden and severe fever and swollen lymph nodes, the infection is more likely bacterial. If your child has these symptoms, you should see a health professional to be tested for strep throat. Tonsillitis will usually go away on its own. Gargling with salt water, drinking warm tea, and using other home treatment measures can give some relief. Nonprescription pain relievers, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) may also be used by adults and children 6 months and older. Surgical removal of the tonsils (tonsillectomy) should only be performed after careful consideration of your child's medical history and overall health by you and your child's prin



- **Ear Infections**

Fluid from a cold can become trapped in the inner ear. This is a perfect place for organisms to grow and cause infection. Ear infections occur mainly in children because their ear canal's are smaller and get blocked more easily. The main symptom is an earache, which can be painful. Babies and young children may be fussy. They may pull at their ears and cry and have trouble sleeping or hearing. A fever is common as well. You may see thick, yellow fluid coming from their ears. This is not serious and usually makes the pain go away. The eardrum usually heals on its own. Kids may have trouble