

Parent Guide



@twinklparents

We're excited to share this activity with you. If you are interested in finding more exciting, fun and interesting activities for you and your children, then check out these links to different areas of the [Twinkl Parents](#) website.

games



crafts



puzzles



experiments



word searches



What is this resource and how do I use it?

The following information is designed to help parents and carers identify and treat common childhood illnesses. The sheets can be printed and stuck up as posters or combined to create an information booklet.

What skills does this practise?

Health and Safety

Topic Knowledge - Illnesses

Further Activity Ideas and Suggestions

For more information about any of these illnesses, please see the NHS website. If you have any concerns about your child's health, contact your doctor. In the event of an emergency, call 999.

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Childhood Illnesses Parent Information



We hope you find the information on our website and resources useful. This resource is provided for informational and educational purposes only. It is intended to offer general information and should never be taken as medical advice. As medical information is situation-specific and can change, we do not warrant that the information provided is correct. You and your children should not rely on the material included within this resource and we do not accept any responsibility if you or your children do. It is up to you to contact a suitably qualified health professional if you are concerned about your health or the health of your children.

Childhood Illnesses Parent Information

Chickenpox (Varicella)

Chickenpox is a common illness in childhood that usually makes children mildly unwell. It can, however, be dangerous during pregnancy.

Symptoms:

- feeling generally unwell
- fever
- headache
- red spots which turn into blisters and eventually scab (usually they first appear on the chest, head, neck and under the arms)

Who to call:

Visit your pharmacist for advice. Call your GP if your child is very distressed.

What to do:

- Give paracetamol (NOT ibuprofen)
- Use chamomile lotion to cool rash and blisters
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Try not to let your child scratch the scabs as this can lead to infection (warm baths can ease itching)
- Keep your child away from pregnant women - if someone who is pregnant has been exposed to chickenpox, they should call their doctor or midwife.

Time off school:

Immediately after being diagnosed until the scabs crust over

Conjunctivitis (Red or Pink Eye)

Conjunctivitis causes the eye to be red, swollen and itchy. It can be caused by a virus or bacterial infection. It usually clears up on its own but medicine from the pharmacy can help.

Symptoms:

- red eyes that burn or feel gritty
- pus coming from the eye that sticks to lashes
- watery eyes

Who to call:

Speak to your pharmacist for advice. If the infection has not cleared up after two weeks, see your GP.

What to do:

- follow your pharmacist's advice
- use a cool face cloth to ease burning

Time off school:

Children with conjunctivitis usually don't need time off school.

Childhood Illnesses Parent Information

Coronavirus/COVID-19

Coronavirus is a collective term given to a family of viruses. The illness is usually not serious in children and can be treated without visiting your local GP. If you or your child has been exposed to coronavirus you must isolate yourself immediately as it can be life-threatening to some people.

Symptoms:

- high temperature
- new, continuous cough
- loss or change to sense of smell or taste

Who to call:

See your pharmacist for advice if you are not in isolation (NHS Volunteers can help if you can't leave the house). Call NHS 111 if symptoms become unmanageable in the home environment.

What to do:

- You must get a PCR test immediately to confirm the diagnosis
- If your test is positive you must self-isolate immediately
- Take paracetamol to ease temperatures
- Drink plenty of water

Time off school:

Those who test positive for coronavirus must self-isolate at home. They must not leave the house or have visitors. In England, the standard length of self-isolation is ten days from when their symptoms began. However, you can begin daily lateral flow testing after five days and leave self-isolation early if you have two consecutive negative tests.

If you still have a high temperature and/or feel unwell after ten days, continue to self-isolate and seek medical advice.

Croup

Croup is a common childhood illness that may cause children difficulty breathing as it affects the airways. Croup is usually worse at night. Although it is usually mild, croup should be treated by a GP.

Symptoms:

- difficulty breathing
- rasping sound when breathing
- barking cough

Who to call:

Call 111 or your GP

What to do:

- Sit your child upright to help them breathe more easily
- Give them plenty of fluids
- Keep your child calm as crying can make breathing more difficult

Time off school:

Children with mild croup can attend school but should be kept off if it gets more serious.

This guidance is correct for residents of England as of January 2022. Advice may change over time and differs in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and outside of the UK. Consult your government website for up to date advice for your area.

Childhood Illnesses Parent Information

Ear Infection

Ear infections are common in small children and can often be recognised because a child will pull on or rub their ear.

Symptoms:

- fever
- general cold symptoms
- discharge from the ear

Who to call:

See your pharmacist for advice

What to do:

- Give your child paracetamol or ibuprofen
- A warm face cloth on the ear can help ease congestion

Time off school:

Your child should be able to attend school unless they are very ill.

Head Lice (Nits)

Head lice are small insects that live in people's hair. They are easily passed from one person to another and have nothing to do with how dirty or clean someone's hair is.

Symptoms:

- itchy scalp

Who to call:

See your pharmacist for advice

What to do:

You will need to use specialist lice shampoo to get rid of head lice and closely follow the instructions on the packet. Head lice can be very difficult to get rid of and thorough wet combing with a fine-toothed comb is required after shampooing to pull out all dead lice and any eggs. Multiple lice shampoo treatments are also often necessary.

Time off school:

Children should be treated as soon as lice are spotted in the hair and can return to school immediately afterwards. Parents should inform the school when their child is infected.

Childhood Illnesses Parent Information

Impetigo

Impetigo is an infection that affects the skin. It is usually not serious and often gets better with treatment in about a week.

Symptoms:

- red crusty sores (crusts can look similar to cornflakes)

Who to call:

See your GP for antibiotic cream or tablets

What to do:

- Keep blisters clean and cover them with gauze
- Wash your hands regularly
- Wash all bed linen and towels at high temperatures
- Clean down toys with antibacterial wipes

Time off school:

Children need to be kept off school until 48 hours after starting antibiotics or when lesions are crusted over.

Measles

Measles is a highly infectious viral illness that can cause serious complications such as pneumonia or encephalitis in some people. It is more serious than most other childhood illnesses but is now uncommon in the UK due to the MMR vaccination.

Symptoms:

- Begins with general cold and flu symptoms like a cough
- Sore eyes
- Fever (warm to touch or 37.5°C or above)
- Rash with red raised lumps beginning behind the ears (this may not be itchy)

Who to call:

Your GP

What to do:

- give paracetamol or ibuprofen
- warm drinks to ease cough
- warm water to ease itchy eyes

Time off school:

Immediately after being diagnosed until four days after rash disappears

Childhood Illnesses Parent Information

Meningitis

Meningitis is potentially a very serious illness that affects the brain and spinal cord and needs to be treated as soon as it is recognised. It can be caused by either viral or bacterial illnesses.

Symptoms:

- high temperature
- vomiting
- headache
- fits
- unresponsiveness
- stiff neck
- rash that does not fade when a glass is rolled over it

Who to call:

Immediately call 111, your local GP or 999 if you suspect your child has meningitis.

What to do:

Seek medical help immediately.

Time off school:

Time off will vary depending on the severity of the illness.

Mumps

Swollen glands around the cheeks and under the chin is the telltale sign of mumps, although this swelling should go down after about a week. Mumps can be prevented with the MMR vaccine in the UK.

Symptoms:

- feeling generally unwell
- high temperature
- pain and swelling on the side of the face and under the chin
- pain when chewing

Who to call:

See your pharmacist for advice and contact GP to confirm diagnosis

What to do:

- Give ibuprofen to ease swelling (dose suitable to your child's age and weight - consult your pharmacist if unsure)
- Drink lots of water
- Apply a warm compress to the swollen areas

Time off school:

Your child needs to stay off school for five days after the onset of swelling.

Childhood Illnesses Parent Information

Ringworm

Ringworm is a fungal skin infection that is (confusingly) not caused by worms. It can be passed on from an infected person, can appear anywhere on the body and is usually shaped like a large ring.

Symptoms:

- raised rash in the shape of a ring

Who to call:

See your pharmacist for advice

What to do:

- Wash all towels and bedding
- Wash hands regularly
- Begin pharmacist recommended treatment as soon as possible

Time off school:

Time off school is not usually required after treatment has begun

Rubella/German Measles

German Measles are usually only serious for those who are pregnant, who need to see a GP as soon as they can if they have been exposed. For children, it is mostly only a mild illness and can be prevented with the MMR vaccination.

Symptoms:

- mild cold symptoms
- high temperature
- rash on the face and body with flat pale spots
- may be some swelling in the neck glands

Who to call:

You do not need to call a GP unless your child is very distressed

What to do:

- Drink lots of water
- Rest
- Take ibuprofen or paracetamol suitable to your child's age and weight (consult your pharmacist if unsure)

Time off school:

Children can return to school five days after the rash has appeared.

Childhood Illnesses Parent Information

Scabies

Scabies is a rash that is easy to get and can infect anyone. It is caused by tiny mites that burrow into the skin causing itching and irritation.

Symptoms:

- raised spots
- intense itching that gets worse at night
- rash often starts between the fingers

Who to call:

Speak to your pharmacist for advice

What to do:

- Use the cream your pharmacist gives you
- Wash all towels and bedding

Time off school:

Children can return to school 24 hours after the first treatment.

Slapped Cheek Disease

Slapped cheek disease, also known as fifth disease is caused by a virus called parvovirus B19. It can be hard to diagnose as most people don't know they have it until the rash appears, which is also when it ceases to be contagious. It is usually mild, but can be dangerous during pregnancy. If you are pregnant and think you may have been exposed, see your GP.

Symptoms:

- high temperature
- runny nose
- sore throat
- headache
- red rash on one or both cheeks
- spotty, itchy rash of raised red spots on the body

Who to call:

See your pharmacist for advice (you only need to see your GP if you are pregnant)

What to do:

- Drink lots of water
- Rest
- Take ibuprofen or paracetamol
- Use moisturiser or antihistamine cream on itchy skin

Time off school:

Children do not need to take time off school once the rash has appeared. Inform the school your child has been infected so information can be disseminated to parents.

Childhood Illnesses Parent Information

Threadworms (Pinworms)

Threadworms are tiny white worms that can live in a person's intestines. They appear as short pieces of thread and can be visible in faeces or around the rectum. They are caught by ingesting threadworm eggs so washing hands is very important to stop the spread.

Symptoms:

- visible worms in faeces or around the rectum
- itchy bottom

Who to call:

See your pharmacist for advice

What to do:

- Take medication provided by your pharmacist
- Encourage your child to wash their hands regularly, particularly before eating
- Shower every morning
- Wash all sleepwear, sheets and towels
- Change children's underwear each morning

Time off school:

No time off school is necessary.

Whooping Cough

Whooping cough (also called pertussis) can be serious, especially in babies under six months old, and depending on the severity of the illness can require hospital treatment. Most pregnant women are vaccinated in the UK to prevent their newborn getting whooping cough. However, it is still possible that babies can become infected which can be extremely serious.

Symptoms:

- general cold symptoms
- severe coughing bouts that get worse at night
- may bring up mucus or vomit
- gasping for breaths between coughs (this can sound like a 'whoop')

Who to call:

See your GP urgently or call 111 if you think your child has whooping cough

What to do:

- Speak to your GP who may prescribe antibiotics
- Rest
- Drink fluids

Time off school:

Whooping cough is highly contagious and children will be infectious from the first signs of illness. They need to be kept away from others until three weeks after coughing started. Antibiotics can reduce this infectious period.