Managing colds and flu

Advice for parents/carers on caring for a sick child and minimising the spread of germs

Dettol
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Caring for your family

Healthy hygiene

With over 80 years' expertise in hygiene and a shared interest in protecting infants and young children from infections, Dettol, together with the Community Practitioners' and Health Visitors' Association (CPHVA), has developed this leaflet to help you care for your child when they have a cold or flu and help prevent it spreading to others.

Colds and flu

Colds and flu (influenza) are both highly infectious illnesses. They share some of the same symptoms – such as sore throat and cough – but are caused by different viruses.

A cold is usually a mild illness that mainly affects the nose and throat. Flu tends to last longer and be more severe, often making you feel so unwell that you have to stay in bed until you feel better. In some cases, flu can be very serious and may require hospital treatment.

Children with long-term health conditions* – such as asthma, diabetes, heart or lung disease, or those with weakened immunity – are more at risk of developing complications like a bacterial chest infection or middle ear infection. Babies, pregnant women and the elderly are also at greater risk.

*The flu vaccine is given to children over the age of six months who have certain long-term medical conditions. It is also offered to all healthy children aged two, three and four as part of the NHS childhood vaccination programme (Winter 2014/15).

Is it flu or just a cold?

In addition to typical cold symptoms, it's probably flu if your child:

- feels unwell, weak and very tired
- has a sudden high temperature
- has aches and pains.

A severe cold can also cause aches and a high temperature, so it can be hard to tell the difference. Generally, though, symptoms such as fever, fatigue and muscle aches are more likely and more severe with flu.

See your doctor if you are concerned

Whether it's a cold or flu, seek medical advice if your child has:

- a long-term condition, such as asthma or diabetes
- a temperature of 40°C or higher (38°C or higher if your child is less than 3 months old)
- difficulty breathing
- other symptoms that concern you, such as severe headache or pain/swelling in the face or chest
- earache, as this could indicate an ear infection that may require treatment
- a sore throat for longer than three or four days, or unusually severe throat pain, as they may have tonsillitis
- symptoms for more than 10 days, particularly if your child is coughing up green, yellow or brown mucus as this could be a sign of a bacterial infection.

If your GP is unavailable, contact your local out-of-hours service or NHS 111/NHS Direct Wales 0845 46 47 for advice.

Looking after your poorly child

If your child has flu, chances are they'll feel too poorly to go to school/nursery. It's best to keep them off until they feel well enough to return, typically around 24 hours after symptoms improve. When your child has a cold, they only need to stay away from school/nursery if they feel unwell.

Offer lots to drink and plenty of rest

If your child is generally healthy, you can usually manage the symptoms of cold or flu without seeing a doctor. Let them rest at home, dress them appropriately for their surroundings, keep their room at a comfortable temperature, and offer lots to drink. If they are hungry, let them eat.

Help clear a blocked nose by placing an extra pillow under their head in bed (if they are over the age of 1). Warm, moist air may help to ease a blocked nose, so try taking them into a steamy bathroom or try using a vaporiser to humidify the air.

If your child has aches and pains, speak to your pharmacist or health visitor for advice on medicines that can help.

Stop germs spreading

Cold and flu viruses spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes, sending infected droplets into the air around them. These may be breathed in by another person or contaminate surrounding surfaces. If you touch your nose, mouth or eyes after touching a contaminated surface, then you could become infected. Good hygiene is therefore essential.

Teach good hygiene habits

Show your child how to sneeze or cough into a tissue and put it straight in the bin, washing their hands afterwards. Make sure you are setting a good example by doing this yourself.

Encourage thorough hand washing, explaining why it's important. Teach your child the 8-step hand washing shown on the right. It should take 45-60 seconds to wash your hands properly, or about as long as it takes to sing the 'Happy Birthday' song twice.

Disinfect surfaces

Minimise the spread of germs at home by cleaning and disinfecting surfaces that your family often touch, such as door handles, hand rails, light switches, the telephone, taps and the toilet flush handle.

8-steps to clean hands

Remember to wash your own hands properly too, as your child will copy you.

Dettol helps to safeguard the health of families and their loved ones through good hygiene. We are passionate about health and work with partners and medical associations around the world to promote good hygiene.

Let's do more for health together. For healthy tips and more, visit our website at **www.dettol.co.uk**.

Dettol CPHVA unite in HEALTH

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Use biocides safely. Always read the label and product information before use.

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