



Primary school children NHS Toolkit

Help keep your children healthy
and ready for anything with this
handy guide for five to 11-year-olds.

Common childhood health issues

Head lice

Head lice are tiny insects that live in hair. They are a common problem. The only way to be sure someone has head lice is by finding live lice or eggs. You can do this by combing their hair with a special detection comb, which can be purchased at a pharmacy. Although largely harmless, they can be irritating and live in the hair for a long time.

You don't need to see your GP. Your pharmacist will be able to recommend treatment or you can remove them with a special fine-toothed comb.

Conjunctivitis

Treatment isn't usually needed for conjunctivitis because the symptoms often clear up within a couple of weeks. Regularly washing your hands and not sharing pillows or towels will help prevent it spreading.

Children don't need to stay away from school if they have conjunctivitis, unless they are feeling particularly unwell.

Coughs and colds

It's normal for a child to have several colds a year. This is because there are hundreds of different cold viruses and young children have no immunity to any of them as they have never had them before.

They gradually build up immunity and get fewer colds.

Most colds get better in five to seven days, but can take up to two weeks in small children.

If your child has had a cough that has lasted longer than three weeks, see a GP.

If your child's temperature is very high, or they feel hot and shivery, they may have a chest infection. You should take them to a GP, or you can contact 111.

Upset tummy

A stomach ache, including stomach cramps or abdominal pain, doesn't usually last long and isn't usually caused by anything serious.

If you're concerned, a pharmacist can give advice and suggest any medication which may be required, such as oral rehydration. If your child has diarrhoea, most cases will clear up after a few days without treatment, and you may not need to take them to the GP. They should drink plenty of fluids – frequent small sips of water – until it passes.

Threadworm

Threadworms, also known as pinworms, are tiny parasitic worms that infect the large intestine of humans. They are common in children under the age of 10. They look like pieces of white thread in your child's poo. If you think you or your child may have threadworms, you can usually treat the infection yourself with medication available at pharmacies without a prescription.

However, pregnant women must not buy medication from a pharmacy. They should speak to their GP or use NHS 111 online or by phone.

Asthma

Make sure your child has an inhaler, knows where it is, and knows how and when to use it.

Be Antibiotic Aware

Antibiotics will have no effect on viruses, such as colds and flu, most sore throats, and may do more harm than good. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed increases the risk of getting an infection later that resists antibiotic treatment.

Sore throats

Sore throats are often caused by viral illnesses, such as colds or flu.

Your child's throat may be dry and sore for a day or two before a cold starts. You can give them paracetamol or ibuprofen to reduce the pain.

Most sore throats get better on their own after a few days.

If your child has a sore throat for more than four days, a high temperature and is generally unwell, see a GP.

What to do if your child is unwell

It can be difficult to tell when a child is seriously ill, but the main thing is to trust your instincts.

You know better than anyone else what your child is usually like, so you'll know when something is seriously wrong.

If your child does not seem to be seriously ill, you can usually look after them at home. They should feel better in a few days.

If they're uncomfortable, you can give them [children's paracetamol](#) or [children's ibuprofen](#). Check the leaflet to make sure the medicine is suitable for your child and to see how much to give them.

A pharmacist can give you advice about how to ease your child's symptoms and whether you need to see a doctor.

Strep A

Strep A is a common type of bacteria. Most strep A infections are mild and easily treated, but some are more serious.

Symptoms of a strep A infection

Common symptoms of strep A include:

- [flu-like symptoms](#), such as a high temperature, swollen glands or an aching body
- [sore throat](#) (strep throat or [tonsillitis](#))
- a rash that feels rough, like sandpaper ([scarlet fever](#))
- scabs and sores ([impetigo](#))
- pain and swelling ([cellulitis](#))
- severe muscle aches
- nausea and vomiting.

Strep A infections are more common in children, but adults can also sometimes get them.

Most strep A infections are not serious and can be treated with antibiotics. But rarely, the infection can cause serious problems. This is called invasive group A strep (iGAS).



Use the right NHS service for you

Many minor health issues can be dealt with at home or by seeing a pharmacist.

You can visit an urgent treatment centre if your child has a suspected broken bone or fracture, a sprain or a strain, minor cut, burn or scald.

You don't need an appointment and they are open a minimum of 12 hours

a day from 8am to 8pm, 365-days-a-year, including bank holidays.

If you're not sure where to go or what to do, use NHS 111. Available 24/7 online at 111.nhs.uk or by phone.

You can also visit www.stophinkchoose.co.uk for a list of local services, including a map of pharmacies and urgent treatment centres.

Help your child stay safe with vaccinations

Making sure your child has all the right vaccinations is important – vaccinations are safe, effective and help protect people at risk of getting seriously ill from viruses.

Before primary school

At three years and four months, your child will be offered [pre-school vaccinations](#). These consist of one vaccination offering protection against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and polio and one offering protection against measles, mumps and German measles (rubella). These are safe to be given together.

Vaccinations are safe and important as they strengthen your child's immunity to help them fight disease and infection as they begin school.

Covid-19

Everyone aged five and over can have a first and second dose of the Covid-19 vaccine. These appointments can be booked online. For more details visit www.nhs.uk and search Covid-19.

At primary school

All primary school children are also offered the nasal flu vaccine by the School Aged Immunisation Service from September onwards – it is important for them to be vaccinated against flu as it is an unpleasant illness and can lead to further serious problems, such as pneumonia and bronchitis.

If your child has not received these immunisations yet, they can catch-up. You can contact your GP practice to check your child's [immunisation history](#) and to book an appointment, if necessary.

More details about vaccinations are on www.nhs.uk/vaccinations

Looking after your mental health

Your child's mental health is just as important as their physical health.

[Good Mental Health Matters](#) contains useful tips for parents, along with details of Fantastic FRED, which has been touring primary schools across Kent for the last few years with a simple message for children about what they can do to help keep their minds and bodies healthy:

Food - eat the right foods.

Rest - get enough sleep.

Exercise - be active.

Devices - manage time on digital devices.



Life-threatening emergency?

If the illness or injury is life-threatening, including a rash that doesn't go away when pressed with a glass, don't hesitate to call 999 straight away.