

# Patient Advice: Minor Illness & Ailments



This guide has been produced by Grove House Practice to help you manage your family's health.

You can find further information by contacting:

- NHS Direct on 111 or [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) for general health advice.
  - Your local pharmacist.
- Care at the Chemist scheme (See local pharmacist for details).
- [www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk) for a variety of patient information leaflets.

**If you are in any doubt, please contact your doctor.**

## Introduction

Many minor illnesses can be treated at home without ever needing to come to the surgery. Your local pharmacist can advise about minor illnesses and using 'over the counter medication'. You will find included in this booklet, our recommendations for your family medicine box and advice on how to manage the common minor illnesses at home.



### 1. Your family 'Medicine Box'

We would recommend that all patients have a 'medicine box' in which to keep the following medicines in the event that you or a family member develops a minor illness. These can usually be obtained from your local supermarket or pharmacy. Medicines and dressing should always be kept in a locked box or cupboard away from children.

- **Paracetamol:** tablets and/or liquid (eg calpol) for relief of fever and pain (do not exceed the maximum recommended dose)
- **Soluble aspirin:** for adults and children older than 16 years for relief of pain. It can also be used for gargling to treat sore throats. Do not exceed the maximum recommended dose.
- **Antiseptic cream:** for spots, sores and grazes.
- **Antiseptic solution** (eg TCP) diluted as directed, for cleaning wounds and grazes, mouth ulcers and sore throats.
- **Menthol crystals:** to dilute in hot water for steam inhalations to ease catarrh and sinus congestion.
- **Vapour rub:** (eg Vick) for blocked sinuses and catarrh and useful for children with blocked noses or dry coughs.
- **Calamine lotion:** for dabbing insect bites, sunburn and rashes, especially chicken pox rash.
- **Anti-histamine:** ask your local pharmacist for advice regarding the best antihistamine to use. These can be used for hay fever, allergic rashes and itching.
- **Dressing strips:** for minor cuts and **dry dressing** (gauze) for cleaning wounds and cuts.
- **Crepe bandage** (3 inch): to keep dressings in place and to support sprained joints.
- **Thermometer** (electronic): normal body temperature is 37 degrees centigrade/celsius.
- **Rehydration salts** (eg dioralyte) to treat dehydration cause by diarrhoea and vomiting.
- **Tweezers:** to remove splinters.
- **Moisturising cream** (eg aqueous cream): for dry patches of skin.

## 2. Cough/Chesty Cough

Most coughs are caused by viruses and will settle in two weeks. Young children often get 'noisy chests'. This is because they have smaller airways and thinner rib cages than adults. A 'noisy chest' is not always a sign of a chest infection.

Coughing naturally helps the body fight against infection. Use simple remedies such as honey and lemon, as cough medicines bought over the counter are unlikely to help.



Make an appointment to see your doctor if you have any of the following:

- You have an underlying lung condition such as asthma, bronchitis, emphysema
- Shortness of breath
- Wheezing
- Blood in your sputum/phlegm
- Ongoing fevers
- Unexplained weight loss
- You are worried about your child with a cough
- The cough has not improved after two weeks
- Chest pains

## 3. Earache



80% of earaches will settle within three days without treatment. Antibiotics are not usually needed but may be considered if pain is lasting longer than three days, there is associated fever, in children under 2 years of age and if both ears are affected.

To help with discomfort from earache:

- Take regular paracetamol for a few days as per directions on bottle/packet.

## 4. Colds

Colds are very common. Normal, healthy children can sometimes have 8 or more colds in a year. These are caused by viruses and will not respond to antibiotics. Most colds will improve after 2-5 days. You may not eat a lot whilst unwell with a cold but do not worry about this.

To help with the symptoms of cold:

- Take regular paracetamol for a few days as per directions on bottle/packet. This will help with the fever and aches and pains. For children under the age of 1 year consult your local pharmacist for recommended dose of paracetamol.
- Drink plenty of fluids.
- Rest as much as possible.

## 5. Insect Bites



These usually appear on exposed areas in the summertime and can be intensely itchy. Most insect bites will settle within a few days but if concerned seek advice from your local pharmacist.

To help with the itching from insect bites:

- Apply calamine lotion to the bite regularly as per directions on bottle.
- Use antiseptic cream to clean the insect bite.
- Anti-histamine tablets/liquid can be helpful. See your local pharmacist for this.
- Avoid hot showers/baths as they can make the itching worse.



If there is a tic attached to the bite then try to remove the tic as close to the skin as possible by gently pulling upwards.

**Do not use Vaseline or a lit match.**

## **6. Diarrhoea and Vomiting**

This usually settles within 1-2 days and is usually caused by a virus.

To help with the symptoms of diarrhoea and vomiting:

- Drink plenty of fluids and use rehydration salts (eg.dioralyte) mixed with water
- Rest the stomach by having no solid food for 24 hours and avoid spicy food and dairy products when re-introducing food.



Make a telephone appointment if any of the following are present and we will arrange to see you or your child if necessary:

- You have a child or baby that is vomiting
- There is blood in the diarrhoea or vomit
- Severe stomach pain present
- High fever
- You have recently returned from an exotic location
- There is no improvement after 48 hours

## **7. Sinusitis.**

Sinusitis can cause pain in the forehead and cheeks with blocked nose and ears. 65% of cases do not require treatment.

To help with sinus pain:

- Try steam inhalation
- Take regular paracetamol for a few days as per directions on bottle/packet.
- Decongestants can also be useful. See your local pharmacist for further advice re these.

If the sinus symptoms last for more than one week, you are having recurrent episodes or are particularly unwell, make an appointment with a doctor to discuss further.



## 8. Ear Wax



Most ear wax will be removed naturally by the mechanism of the ear canal. Avoid using cotton buds to remove wax as this can introduce infection into the outer part of the ear and can cause pain. Ear wax can cause deafness, earache, tinnitus, dizziness or cough.

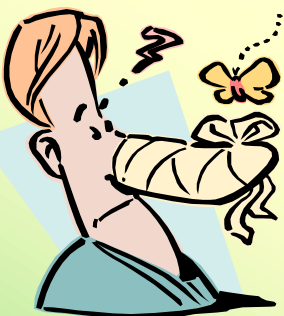
To help with ear wax:

- Use olive oil drops (from your local pharmacy) and apply to the affected ear twice daily for 2 weeks. Your local pharmacy can provide a pipette which is easier to use.
- To apply the drops: lie on your side and pour a few drops into the ear and leave it for several minutes, then repeat on the other side as necessary.



If your symptoms persist for more than 2 weeks despite using olive oil drops, please make an appointment with the treatment room services on **0808 196 1425**

## 9. Nosebleeds



Nosebleeds usually occur after a blow to the nose. It is not uncommon for the sensitive vessels inside the nose to bleed on minimal irritation such as blowing the nose.

To manage a nosebleed:

- Sit with your head forward with your mouth open and pinch your nose below the bone for 10 minutes.
- Apply an ice pack (wrapped in a cloth) over your forehead for 10 minutes.
- Once stopped avoid hot drinks and blowing your nose for 12 hours and sleep on 2-3 pillows to keep your head elevated.



If the nosebleed continues for longer than 10 minutes see further advice from your doctor or go to Accident and Emergency. If you are taking warfarin or aspirin then please seek medical help if the bleeding is heavy and/or lasts longer than 10 minutes.



## 10. Sore Throat

A sore throat does not usually need any treatment to make it go away as sore throats are mostly caused by viruses. It will usually get better by itself.

To help with discomfort from a sore throat:



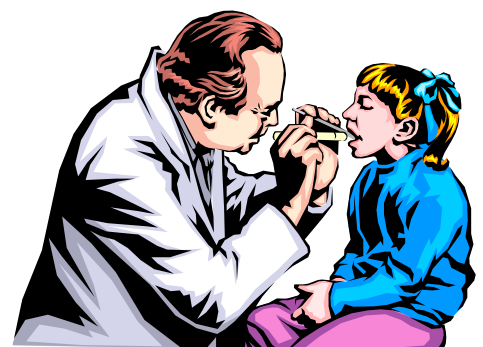
- Take regular paracetamol for a few days as per directions on bottle/packet.
- Adults and adolescents older than 16 years can gargle and swallow soluble aspirin in addition to taking paracetamol
- Eat soft foods and drink plenty of fluids.



If your sore throat last longer than two weeks, if you have a high fever, if you have other serious illnesses or are taking steroids or immunosuppressants then see a doctor.

If your child seems very unwell or has a sore throat and temperature, but not a cough, for more than three days, he/she should be reviewed by a doctor.

You do not need to look into your child's throat. But, if you do and you are worried about large tonsils, this is not by itself, something to be concerned about. However, if your child is having breathing difficulties or seems very unwell, you should consult a doctor for further advice.

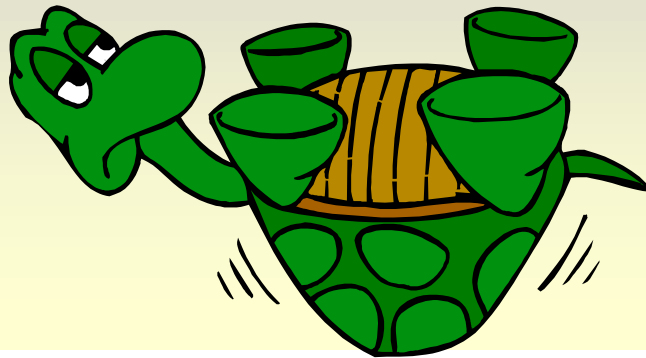


## 11. Back Pain

Back pain is normally caused by a sudden movement or injury (even minor movement or injury) and can result in intense muscular spasm.

To help with back pain:

- Take regular paracetamol for a few days as per directions on bottle/packet.
- You could also take ibuprofen in addition to paracetamol unless you have a history of asthma or stomach ulceration.
- Apply heat packs/hot water bottle (with a cover) to the affected area
- Avoid rest. Contrary to popular belief, it is best to keep mobile and not to rest with back pain.
- Keep good posture



---

***If the pain is severe, does not settle after several days, is associated with numbness or weakness in the legs or you are unable to open your bladder or bowels then please see a doctor ASAP.***

---

**THE REST OF THIS ADVICE BOOKLET IS  
AIMED SPECIFICALLY AT CHILDHOOD  
AILMENTS**





## 12. Children with a temperature

Children can often respond to infections by developing a fever. This is a normal response. Most infections are caused by viruses rather than bacteria and so will not respond to antibiotics.

If your child develops a fever (temperature above 37 degrees Celsius):

- Give regular paracetamol liquid eg Calpol as per directions on the bottle regularly. For children under the age of 1 year consult your local pharmacist for recommended dose of paracetamol. Do not exceed the recommended dose.
- Give plenty of cool liquids. Clear fluids are best such as water or dilute squash. Give small sips every 5 minutes. Ice lollies can also be helpful to encourage young children to take fluids.
- Dress your child in loose clothing and keep the room as cool as possible. Do not wrap your child up if they have a fever. If possible cool your child with a fan. You could also try tepid sponging with lukewarm water.

Children with a fever can often become unsettled during the night. It is important to continue with regular paracetamol (as per directions), fluids and tepid sponging during the night also.

If your child is not improving or is particularly unwell, please contact the surgery for further advice. We will always make arrangements to see an unwell child as soon as possible. Children are safe to come into the surgery with a fever.

### Signs that your child needs to see a doctor:

- He/she is not drinking enough fluids.
- He/she has less wet nappies than usual.
- He/she is not interested in playing with toys or is floppy.
- He/she has a high pitched cry and cannot be settled.

NB If he/she has developed a rash that does not disappear when a glass is placed over it **seek urgent medical advice**

### 13. Children Not Eating or Drinking



Children often eat and drink less when they are unwell. This is not unusual. Most will start to drink before becoming dehydrated. However you should watch for signs of dehydration such as drowsiness, dry eyes/mouth, weeing less. This is especially so for young children (under 1 year old) and those who are vomiting.

To help with hydration:

- Encourage your child to drink small amounts of fluids regularly (every 5 minutes).
- Try ice lollies to encourage small children to take fluids.

Most children can go a few days without eating much. See section 15 for advice on when you should seek further medical help.

### 14. Childhood Rashes.

If your child has a rash that disappears when a glass is placed over it and is well then the rash is probably due to a virus and will likely settle within a few days.

**Any rash that does not disappear when a glass is placed over it is a MEDICAL EMERGENCY and please call 999.**

### 15 Chicken Pox

This rash is due to a specific virus. It appears as small red patches with itchy blisters. The child remains contagious for 5 days after developing the rash or until the last blister has scabbed over so may need to stay away from school or nursery during this time.

To help with chicken pox rash:

- Apply calamine lotion to each of the spots/blisters
- Cool baths

## 16. Possible Serious Illness in Children



No guide can be complete so if you are worried about your child then you should seek further medical advice.

The following are signs of possible serious illness:

- Your child is **drowsy or irritable**. (Although children with a temperature are often more sleepy, irritable and lacking in interest than usual, they usually improve after treatment with paracetamol and/or ibuprofen) If they do not improve or if they are very drowsy indeed, they should see a doctor urgently.
- Your child has **problems breathing** including rapid breathing and being short of breath or “working hard” to breath. (it sometimes looks as though the tissues between the ribs and below the ribs get sucked in each time they breath). Any child who has a lot of difficulty breathing needs to see a doctor urgently.
- **Cold or discoloured hands or feet** with a warm body.
- **Severe arm and/or leg pain** (for no obvious reason).
- **Unusual skin colour** (pale, blue or dusky around the lips).
- **High temperature** (40 degrees Celsius or higher) - not necessarily a sign of serious infection, but if the temperature does not come down with treatment or your child has other symptoms on this list then seek further medical advice.
- An infant who is **not feeding** or any child that is showing **signs of dehydration**. See section 13 (Not Eating or Drinking).

**Symptoms related to meningitis (may only have one of these):**

- **Unusually severe headache**
- **A stiff neck (difficulty putting chin to chest)**
- **Dislike of bright lights**
- **A rash that does not fade with pressure (glass test).**

# Contacting us

Grove House Practice  
St Paul's Health Centre  
High Street  
Runcorn  
Cheshire  
WA7 1AB

Tel: 01928 566561

Appointment Cancellations Tel : 01928 842577  
(message service only)

Website: [www.grovehouse.co.uk](http://www.grovehouse.co.uk)

**If you need urgent medical advice or  
treatment when the Practice is closed,  
or, for general health advice and information you can contact  
111  
(calls are free from landlines and mobiles)**

or, you may wish to go to the Urgent Care Centre in Runcorn at  
Halton General Hospital, Entrance 2, Hospital Way, Runcorn,  
WA7 2DA  
Open 7am—10pm, 7 days a week

or, you may wish to go to the walk-in centre in Widnes at the Health  
Care Resource Centre, Oaks Place,  
Caldwell Road WA8 7GD