



# Primary school children NHS toolkit

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

## STOP

Stay calm, assess the situation

## THINK

What advice or treatment do you need?

## CHOOSE

Choose where to get the right help quickly

## Things you should have at home

Your GP practice or pharmacist will not generally give you a prescription for medicines for a range of common childhood illnesses. Instead, these over-the-counter medicines are available to buy in a local pharmacy or supermarket. The team of health professionals at your local pharmacy can offer help and clinical advice to manage minor health concerns and, if your symptoms suggest it's more serious, they'll make sure you get the care you need.

## Thermometer – for fevers

Digital and forehead thermometers are available for checking your child's temperature. As a general rule, in children, a temperature of over 37.5C (99.5F) is a fever. If your child does have a fever, there are various things you can do to bring it down: Give children's paracetamol (for children three months and over) and encourage your child to drink extra fluids, use their favourite cool drink, or ice lollies.

Make sure your child is not wearing too many clothes – a vest or pants is enough if the house is at a normal temperature. Reduce the night-time bedding to a light cotton sheet only. Make sure your child is up-to-date with immunisations.

## Simple pain killers

Ask your pharmacist for advice. Paracetamol suitable for children can be bought from a supermarket or pharmacist. There is no need to ask your GP for a prescription.

## Antihistamines

These are medicines often used to relieve symptoms of allergies, such as hay fever. Speak to your pharmacist about what is suitable for your child. You do not need a prescription.



## Oral rehydration sachets

For diarrhoea. Ones that can be dissolved in water are the most suitable products for children. These replace the salt and water lost in diarrhoea.

## Plasters for cuts and grazes

Most cuts and grazes are minor and can be easily treated at home. When the wound has stopped bleeding, wash it under tap water.

Avoid using antiseptic as it may damage the skin and slow healing. Pat it dry and apply a plaster.

Minor wounds should start to heal within a few days, but if they don't, use NHS 111 online or by phone.

## Stay sun safe

Take extra care to protect babies and children. Their skin is much more sensitive than adult skin, and damage caused by repeated exposure to sunlight could lead to skin cancer developing in later life.

From March to October in the UK,  
children should:

- cover up with suitable clothing
- spend time in the shade, particularly from 11am to 3pm
- wear at least SPF30 sunscreen.

Apply sunscreen to areas not protected by clothing, such as the face, ears, feet and backs of hands.

# Common childhood health issues

## Head lice

Head lice are tiny insects that live in all types of 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 bought at a pharmacy. Although largely harmless, they can be irritating and live in the hair for a long time.

You don't need to contact your GP practice. 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, contact your GP practice.

If your child's temperature is very high, or they feel hot and shivery, they may have a chest infection. You should contact your GP practice or NHS 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 that 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 practice or use NHS 111 online or by phone.

## Asthma

Did you know that asthma is the most common long-term medical condition affecting children and young people? If you are the parent of a child or young person with asthma, speak to your GP practice or local pharmacist to discuss getting an asthma management plan in place.

Having an asthma action plan in place will help you understand how to correctly use inhalers.

Find more information at [www.SaferAsthma.co.uk](http://www.SaferAsthma.co.uk)

## 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. Pharmacists can assess and treat sore throats for children aged five and over.

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

## 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

- 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. On rare occasions, the infection can cause serious problems. This is called invasive group A strep (iGAS).

## 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.



## Use the right NHS service for you

Many minor health issues can be dealt with at home or by seeing a pharmacist. Pharmacists can assess and treat earache, impetigo, infected insect bites in children aged one and over.

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](https://111.nhs.uk) or by phone.

You can also visit [www.StopThinkChoose.co.uk](https://www.StopThinkChoose.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. There is no upper age limit on these vaccines, so if your child has missed either of them, please contact your GP practice.

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

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.

## At primary school

From September, all primary school children are also offered the nasal flu vaccine by the School Aged Immunisation Service – 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 you have a primary school-aged child who has a long-term health condition, they may also be eligible for a flu vaccine at their GP practice.

If your child is unable to have the nasal flu vaccination, due to pork (porcine) gelatine, then an injectable vaccine is available.



### Flu

All primary school children are eligible for a free flu vaccination, along with children at secondary school and those aged two and three.

### MMR

Children should have been vaccinated against measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) before they started primary school. If they've not had two doses, you can ask your GP practice.

### Covid

Some children are eligible for a Covid-19 vaccine. Check our website for details.

More details about vaccinations:

[www.GetVaccinatedNow.co.uk](http://www.GetVaccinatedNow.co.uk)

# Looking after your child's mental health

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

## Support for children with special educational needs and disabilities

Neurodivergent children, including those with ADHD or autism can access support in schools and locally without needing a formal diagnosis. Find information about support available at [www.ndkentandmedway.co.uk](http://www.ndkentandmedway.co.uk)

If you are concerned that your child has special educational needs or a disability, you can find out what local support is available by visiting Kent County Council's information hub or Medway's Local Offer:

### Kent

[www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities](http://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities)

### Medway

[www.medway.gov.uk/localoffer](http://www.medway.gov.uk/localoffer)

Captain Wonderweb tours primary schools across Kent with a simple message from the NHS, which encourages children to talk to others, eat better, use tech less, get rest and be active. If you need NHS advice, search 'supporting a child with mental health needs' on [nhs.uk](http://nhs.uk)

## Oral health

A regular teeth-cleaning routine is essential for good dental health.

Make sure your child attends regular dental check-ups as advised by a dentist.

Find information about keeping your child's teeth and gums healthy at [www.nhs.uk/live-well](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well)



## 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.

