

Despite offering your kids the best chance possible with a healthy diet and plenty of exercise, from time to time they will still catch a viral infection.

What is a viral infection?

Viral diseases are extremely widespread infections caused by viruses, a type of microorganism. The most common type of viral disease is the common cold, which is caused by a viral infection of the upper respiratory tract (nose & throat). Other viral diseases that most commonly affect kids include:

Chickenpox * Hand, foot & mouth * Viral gastroenteritis (stomach flu) * Flu (influenza)

What you can do to minimise the symptoms of a virus

Viral diseases are not treatable with antibiotics, which can only cure bacterial diseases and infections. However, the most common viral diseases, like those mentioned above, are **self-limiting** in generally healthy children. **Self-limiting** means that the viral infection causes illness for a period of time, then it resolves and symptoms disappear as your child's immune system attacks the virus and their body recovers. You may not be aware for example, that cold symptoms such as sore throat, runny nose, a cough, can last for two weeks or more.

There is no cure for a viral infection, but you can look after your kids at home by offering them:

Rest * Drinking plenty of fluids * Eating healthily

If your child has an upset tummy or lost their appetite, they won't want to eat, so their intake of fluids is particularly important, even though it might seem they are 'bringing up' most of it, a third of what they drink will be absorbed by their bodies and help with their recovery. With advice from a pharmacist, over the counter, child formulations of paracetamol or ibuprofen can be used to reduce any fever or discomfort. It is very important that you follow the manufacturers advice on dosage.

Where to get help

Your local pharmacist will be able to offer advice and over the counter medication specifically formulated for children to ease symptoms. An excellent source of advice & information regarding symptoms & how to manage them is available on the NHS Choices website, the largest source of health information in the UK. Or calling 111, the NHS non-emergency number. It's fast, easy and free. You will speak to a highly trained adviser, supported by healthcare professionals.

When to see your GP

If your child (or you) has a cold or other virus, there's usually no need to see your GP as it should clear within a week or two. You only really need to contact your GP if:

* symptoms persist for more than 3 weeks * symptoms get suddenly worse * your child has breathing difficulties * they are coughing up greenish mucus

You can access the NHS Choices website via our www.swanagemedical.co.uk



Top Tips for Kid's Health from The Swanage Medical Practice

We all want our children to grow up to be happy, healthy adults; but it can sometimes be hard to know how. This year has seen increased incidence of viral infections like hand, foot & mouth & colds. So following a request from your school, we have put together a list of tips & advice to help you, help your kids, keep feeling great & give them the skills to look after themselves as adults.

Prevention is better than cure

3 key actions that give your child the best chance of good health.

1. Child Immunisation - You may not like your baby/child having an injection but vaccination is a vital step in protecting your child from serious & potentially fatal diseases. Vaccinations are quick, safe & effective. Concerns that too many vaccines at a young age can "overload" your child's immune system are not the case. Studies have shown that vaccines don't weaken a child's immune system. The bacteria & viruses used in vaccines are weakened or killed, & there are far fewer of them than the natural bugs that babies & children come into contact with. In fact, if a child was given 11 vaccines all at the same time, it would only use a 1000th of their immune system! So please consider very carefully the benefits of having your child vaccinated, as the consequences don't just affect your child, but the wider community too.

2. Diet & Exercise - All health professionals agree it's important that children eat properly & do plenty of physical activity to build & maintain a healthy body. Overleaf you will find some useful tips on how to achieve this.

3. Hygiene - Viruses can be passed through tiny droplets of mucus that are sneezed or coughed out into the air by an infected person, and breathed in by another. If an infected person sneezes into their hand, and then touches an object (such as a doorknob, or school chair/desk) the virus can pass from the object to the next person who touches it. By encouraging good hygiene habits in your child, such as regular hand washing & avoiding touching their nose & eyes, you will help them reduce their chances of catching or spreading any lurking bugs.

Food & Nutrition top tips

Kids are consuming THREE times more sugar than they should be (based on the maximum daily added sugar recommendation). Around 30% of the sugar in Kids' diets comes from sugary drinks, such as fizzy pop, juice drinks, squashes, cordials, energy drinks and juice. The Department for health categorically advise that sugary drinks have no place in a child's daily diet.

Sugar Swaps

- Replace sugary & fizzy drinks, with water or semi-skimmed milk (remember that children under 2 need full-fat milk) & diluted fresh fruit juice.
- Swap to low sugar cereals, fruit or toast for breakfast. Many cereals marketed at children are high in sugar & salt.
- Switch to snacks like fresh fruit, carrot sticks & unsalted nuts instead of sweets or biscuits. Many food items marketed as snacks for children are high in sugar, salt, fat & calories (all the things we shouldn't eat too much of). So try & reduce the number of these less healthy snacks your kids are having.
- Don't forget that its sometimes kinder to say no. We all love to give our kids what they want, but try to find different ways to reward them—stickers, or a trip to the park.

Meal time

It's important for kids to have regular, proper meals as they may miss out on essential nutrients otherwise.

- Try to organise the day around 3 regular mealtimes - it's easier to keep kids from pestering for snacks if they know when their next meal is coming!
- Eat together, when you can. Kids copy parents, brothers, sisters & friends - when they see other people happily eating lots of different, healthy foods, they are more likely to follow suit.

Me size meals

It's important to make sure kids get just the right amount of food for their age - not too little & not too much.

- Remember that kids are smaller than adults. Sounds obvious, but an adult tummy is much bigger than a child's - so try & give them a portion that matches their age and not the same amount of food as you. It's also healthier to give a smaller portion to begin with, then let them ask for more if they're still hungry. Try not to nag them to 'eat it all up' if they're full.
- Breakfast is the most important meal of the day and a great way to give your kids the energy they need to kick start their day, so don't let them skip breakfast.

Five a day

It's easier than you think to give your kids five portions of fruit and vegetables a day. For a child, one portion is roughly the amount of fruit or veg they hold in the palm of their hand. Frozen and canned fruit and vegetables count too. It's quick and cheap to boil some frozen peas or open a can of sweetcorn. A piece of fruit or vegetable is a great way of cheering up a lunchbox too!

Cut back on Fat

We all know too much fat is bad for us. But it's not always easy to tell where its lurking. Try and cut down on snack foods as they are often packed with fat; keeping foods like crisps, buns, cakes, pastries and biscuits as occasional treats only. Grilling or baking food in the oven rather than frying can cut the fat content by about half. Also you can trim off any fat you can see from meat before you cook and draining off after cooking will also help.

Get your Kids up and about

The way life is today means our kids are spending too long sitting down. Remember Kids' bodies are designed to be active . Moving around will help them burn off energy and help their muscles and bones grow strong. The more active they are the less likely it is that they will store up excess fat in their bodies which can lead to cancer, type 2 diabetes and heart disease in later life. In addition to activities at school, Kids need to do at least 60 minutes of activity a day to help them stay happy and healthy.

Less screen time, more playtime

You may find it helpful to set a limit to how long your children can sit still in front of the TV, computer or video game. Some families have found saying '2 hours max' screen time each day helps them to make sure kids jump up and play, or go outside after they've been sitting around for a while.

Kids get some exercise at school but it is still important that they are active, moving around before and after school too. Get them off the bus and out of the car - if the school is walking distance, walk it. Getting them up and about after eating, instead of plonking down in front of the telly helps digestion and can be fun!



For the latest information from the NHS about your child's nutritional needs we highly recommend that you visit & join www.nhs.uk/Change4Life. The website offers invaluable tips, vouchers & recipes and a **FREE Sugar Smart App for your phone.**