



## SELF-TREATMENT OF ILLNESSES & ACCIDENTS

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### Back Pain

- Usually begins as a strain caused by poor lifting technique – always bend your knees and keep your back straight
- Rest your back on a firm bed and maintain a good, upright posture when walking or sitting
- Take aspirin or paracetamol – they will not only relieve the pain but any inflammation
- If pain persists or is not beginning to improve after a few days, consult your doctor

### Burns

- Immediately apply large quantities of cold water and persist until pain subsides – this may take 15 minutes or more!
- If the skin is blistered but unbroken apply a loose, dry dressing and keep very clean
- If the burn is larger than 4-5ins in diameter or the skin is broken, consult your doctor or Practice Nurse as soon as possible

### Chickenpox

- A rash appears with small red patches with itchy blisters. As old ones dry up and crust over in 4-5 days, new patches appear
- The most infectious period is from 2-3 days before the rash first appears until the last crusts have dropped off
- Frequent cool, salt baths and OILY calamine lotion will soothe the itching.

### Colds, Coughs and Stuffy Noses

- These are caused by viruses, and even in this day and age there is no cure! **Antibiotics can only kill bacteria**, which are completely different organisms, so don't take any you may have in the house - they won't have any effect
- Drink lots of fluids
- Paracetamol will relieve pains and aches and bring down temperature. Proprietary cold cures are comforting but expensive. The illness will last 5 to 6 days but a cough may persist for a few more days

### Cystitis

- Common in women, this causes more frequent urination and a painful, burning sensation when doing so
- Keep tea and coffee to a minimum but drink as much bland fluid (water, weak fruit squash, barley water or diluted fruit juice) as possible
- If symptoms persist for more than 24 hours consult your doctor

### Diarrhoea & Vomiting

- Prevent dehydration – drink plenty of fluids. *Dioralyte* or *Rehydrat*, available from your chemist, are very useful, especially for children
- No milk or solids should be given for 24 hours
- If vomiting is a problem, take sips of fluid every few minutes
- Symptoms should settle in 24-48 hours but if they persist or vomiting is very frequent, consult your doctor – sooner if a baby or very young child is affected

## Head Lice

- Contrary to popular belief, lice prefer clean hair and are not a sign of poor personal hygiene! They spread by head-to-head contact
- Medicated lotions are obtainable from your chemist – follow the manufacturer's instructions
- Treat ALL the family's heads, not just the child concerned, and notify the school
- A simple but effective treatment is to apply conditioner to the hair and comb through to remove the head lice. Repeat every three days for about two weeks.
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## Insect bites & stings

- Antihistamine tablets can be obtained from the chemist without prescription and will usually relieve most symptoms
- For holiday use, mosquito repellent products to prevent bites are widely available
- Bee stings should be carefully scraped out of the skin, rather than grasped and pulled which simply squeezes more venom into the wound

## Mumps

- The glands in front of one or both ears swell and are painful
- It is infectious from 2-3 days before a swelling appears until 8-10 days after that date
- Consult your Doctor.
- Immunisation can prevent this disease.

## Headache

- A common cause of headache in the morning is grinding your teeth at night. You should see your dentist or you may require prescription glasses so consult an optician.
- Take regular painkillers, taking care to follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Wrapping a warm towel around your neck may relieve the symptoms.
- Placing a cold flannel on affected areas may help.
- Caffeine may sometimes cause headaches consider reducing your intake.
- If severe and persistent consult doctor

## Nose bleeds

- Sit in a chair, leaning forward and breathing through the mouth, and pinch the nose just below the bone for about 10 minutes, by which time the bleeding should have stopped.
- Avoid hot drinks or food for 24 hours and blow the nose only with caution (watch children carefully)
- If symptoms persist, consult your doctor

## Raised Temperature (Fever)

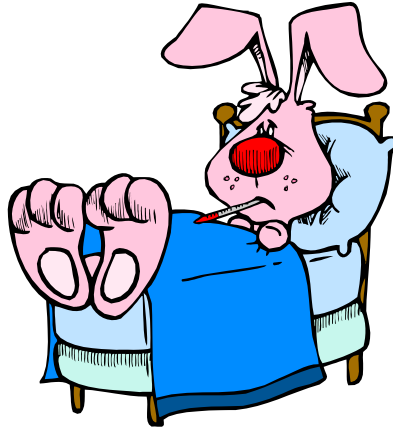
- A fever is natural with most illnesses and simple measures to lower the temperature will make you feel much more comfortable
- Keep the room cool and don't wrap the patient up, even if they say they feel cold - leave the body exposed to allow excess heat to escape, especially children (and see *Looking After the Child With A Temperature* on Page XX) Sponge down with a tepid sponge or flannel – leave the patient damp and repeat when dry
- Take paracetamol or aspirin 4-hourly (only to be used in individuals over the age of 16 years) and plenty of cool drinks

## Sprains

- Apply a cold compress, containing ice if possible (a bag of peas from the freezer is flexible and effective), for 15-30 minutes to reduce swelling
- Firmly apply a crepe bandage
- Rest the sprain until discomfort has subsided – further strain will lead to further swelling and a longer recovery period

## Sunburn

- Sunburn is bad for your skin and children are especially susceptible. Protect skin with sunblock cream and light clothing
- Treat sunburn as for other burns, (see above) – douse with cool water and *keep covered and in the shade* until the skin has healed
- Calamine lotion, paracetamol or antihistamine will give relief while healing takes place



## LOOKING AFTER A CHILD WITH A TEMPERATURE

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We know how worrying it can be to have a sick child. If you are concerned about your child, we will always see them the same day at the surgery. We do ask that whenever possible you bring your child to the surgery rather than requesting a home visit - the child will come to no harm being brought to us and can usually be seen sooner.

A child develops a temperature in response to an infection. Usually they will get over it without antibiotics. Most childhood infections are caused by viruses and these do not respond to antibiotics. A very few children, usually under 5 years old, will have a convulsion when suffering a high temperature - the child suddenly shakes all over and then becomes very still. The following advice is designed to bring your child's temperature down, to avoid the risk of convulsion and to make him or her feel much better.

If your child feels hot to the touch and appears unwell, take his or her temperature. The normal temperature is 37.5C. If the temperature is raised (or you don't have a thermometer but think your child has a temperature), try to lower it as follows:

- Give your child some paediatric paracetamol, at the higher of the recommended doses for their age
- Dress the child in cool clothes, for example a T-shirt and shorts. Leave their heads uncovered.
- Give your child plenty of cool drinks, as fluid is lost with a fever. If he or she is unwilling to drink, encourage small amounts from a favourite or unusual, "treat" cup
- Sponging your child down, especially the head with a cool flannel, will make him or her feel better and help to bring the temperature down
- Repeat the dose of paediatric paracetamol every 4 hours if necessary being mindful of maximum dose in 24 hour period
- A child with a temperature is likely to be restless at night - offer cool drinks and sponge the head should they wake
- If your child does have a convulsion, it should subside in less than five minutes. Lie the child on his side and stay with him while it lasts. If there is another adult in the house, ask them to call your doctor - if not, call the surgery when the convulsion has stopped, or after 10 minutes if it continues.

It is always wise to keep a supply of children's paracetamol (such as Medinol, Calpol or Disprol) at home. It can be given every 4 hours whenever a child has a temperature and in most minor childhood illnesses this is the only treatment required. But, if you are worried about your child or the child fails to improve in 2 or 3 days, it is worth bringing them to the surgery for a check.

## FAMILY MEDICINE CHEST

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Here is a list of useful medicines and descriptions of their uses - all are quite cheap and worth keeping at home .... *but*

***Keep them in a box or cupboard with a lock***

***Store them well out of the reach of children***

### PAINKILLERS

**Aspirin** Soluble or coated tablets are preferable, to reduce the risk of upsetting the stomach. It should not be used by people with stomach problems, and asthmatic people should take care as it can make them wheezy. **Please note: aspirin should not be given to children under 16 years old.** Aspirin eases pain and reduces temperature, and is good for headaches, colds, sore throats and painful bruises etc. In high dosage it reduces swelling in joints, which is why it is sometimes used to treat arthritis. For minor ailments, 1-2 tablets every 4 hours is effective.

**Paracetamol** For children this is available as Calpol or Disprol etc. – the dose depends on the age of the child and directions will be given on the bottle. Older children (12 and over) and adults can be given 1-2 tablets every 4 hours. Paracetamol does two things – eases pain and reduces temperature. It does not make people better but helps them *feel* better - recovery from a viral infection, e.g. the common cold, takes place only when the body's own natural defences destroy the virus, not as a result of medicine.

**COUGH LINCTUS** for dry or painful coughs, (but not coughs caused by the common cold)

**VAPOUR RUB** Useful for children with stuffy noses or dry coughs – rub on the chest or nose. Can also be added to hot water to make steam inhalations for treating catarrh and dry or painful coughs.

**ANTISEPTIC CREAM** or treating sweptic spots, grazes and sores

**INDIGESTION MIXTURES OR TABLETS** Comforting for heartburn, indigestion or hiatus hernia

**DRESSING STRIPS** such as Elastoplast or chemists' own brands, to cover and protect minor cuts, grazes and sores. Remove at night if practicable, to allow the wound to dry and form a natural scab

**THERMOMETER** Both the traditional glass type and, if there are very small children in the family, the new thermal strip types - although slightly less accurate, they are very simple to use

**TWEEZERS** are very useful for removing splinters (and much kinder than a sewing needle!)

**IMMODIUM CAPSULES** for the control of diarrhoea (these are useful for foreign travel but avoid overuse). **Dioralyte** or **Rehydrat** rehydration fluids are also very good for children with diarrhoea or vomiting

**THROAT LOZENGES** There is a huge variety available to comfort sore and itchy throats