

# A Guide

FOR **PARENTS AND CARERS** of children aged five and under

## Common childhood illnesses

**NHS**  
*Ashton, Leigh and Wigan*



This handbook has been produced by United League Commissioning, a group of GP practices working together across St Helens, and Ashton Leigh and Wigan.

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# Welcome

Almost all babies, toddlers and children aged up to five will also get the most common childhood illnesses like chickenpox, colds, sore throats and ear infections.

Often something that can seem quite serious, like a high temperature, can be put down to a cold, which can often be sorted out with a quick trip to your local pharmacy. It's easy to panic and rush your child to the emergency department with a simple cough or cold, which can be treated at home. If you are worried, you must of course go and see your doctor - but it's worth finding out a little more about the common, everyday illnesses so you know what to do and where to go to get help.

This handbook helps point you in the right direction and helps explain what you can do at home to help and where you need to go to get extra help and advice. It has been put together by United League Commissioning, a group of local GP practices working together across Halton and St Helens and Ashton Leigh and Wigan, with help from parents and Health Care professionals

The GPs within United League Commissioning are responsible for improving the health and well-being of local people, and making sure local people can get the health care they need for themselves and their children. Every child is different and there is lots of help available locally - please see our contact details at the back of this booklet to find out what help and support is available near you.

This handbook gives general information only and should not be treated as a substitute for appropriate medical advice from your own doctor or other healthcare professional. Neither ULC nor the publisher can be held responsible or liable for guidance given in this handbook.

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# A guide to services



## Chemist

Local Chemists or Pharmacists have knowledge of most everyday health issues. They can suggest the best medicine to help. There are often Chemists in supermarkets and many are open late.



## Doctor or GP

You will need to register with a local Doctor. Your Doctor can advise, give you the medicines you need and point you in the right direction if you need other specialist services. You will need to make an appointment but most Doctors will see a baby quite quickly if you are worried. After 6pm most services are covered by an Emergency Doctor Service.



## Health Visitor

Your Health Visitor will know you and your baby well. They are there to support you when you need them. They will visit you at home or see you in a clinic and can offer support and advice and can tell you where to get extra help if you need it. They are part of a team of Nurses and Nursery Nurses who are there to support you during the early years.



## Midwife

Your Midwife will know you and your baby well. They offer support and advice and can tell you where to get extra help if you need it. They will support you during pregnancy and the early days.

## Walk-in Centre

We have a Walk-in Centre where appointments are not necessary (see page 50 for opening times).



## NHS Direct 0845 4647

If you are worried, there is an NHS helpline you can call for advice from trained nurses. You are able to speak to them directly. You can get more information from their website [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk). After 6pm most services are covered by an Emergency Doctor Service.



## Accident & Emergency (A&E)

This is for serious situations like head injuries, burns, broken bones or if you are really worried. You do not need to make an appointment but may need to wait.

We have a wide range of healthcare professionals.  
See below for which professional is best to help you.



### Types of thermometer

**Digital thermometers** are quick to use, accurate and can be used under the arm (always use the thermometer under the arm with children under five years old). Hold your child's arm against their body and leave the thermometer in place for the time stated in the instructions.

**Ear thermometers** are put in the child's ear. They take the temperature in a few seconds and do not disturb the child, but they're expensive. Ear thermometers may give low readings when not correctly placed in the ear. Read the instructions carefully.

**Strip-type thermometers**, which you hold on your child's forehead, are not always an accurate way of taking their temperature. They show the temperature of the skin, not the body.

**Mercury-in-glass thermometers** haven't been used in hospitals for years and are no longer available to buy. Do not use mercury thermometers. If your child is exposed to mercury, get medical advice immediately.

**A normal temperature is between 36-36.8°C (96.8-98.24°F).**

Source: NHS Choices.

# Know the basics



## Being prepared and knowing the signs

Parents are usually good at noticing when something is wrong with their baby from quite early on. It is normal to worry that you won't recognise the signs that your baby is unwell. Trust your instincts, you know your baby best.

Learn how to spot the signs of serious illness and how to cope if an accident happens. If you know the basics and you are well prepared, you will find it easier to cope - and less scary. Keep a small supply of useful medicines somewhere up high where a child cannot reach them. There is a useful list in the box on the right, of things to have at home just in case. Make sure you've got the right strength of medicine for the age of your child, always follow instructions carefully and check use by dates.

If your baby seems to have a serious illness it's important to get medical attention as soon as possible.

### Chemist's tips

Keep a small supply of useful medicines. Include things like:

-  Thermometer (See opposite page)
-  Plasters
-  Liquid painkillers (e.g. baby paracetamol)
-  Barrier cream

**Stop**

I have a new baby at home and I am worried I won't know what to do or what to look out for.

**Think**

Be prepared so that if they do become unwell you will know what to do and whom to contact.

**Do**

Keep a small supply of useful medicines. Keep emergency numbers in a place you can find them.

The above information cannot replace specialist treatment. If you are still worried, contact NHS Direct or a Doctor (e.g. your GP or Walk-in Centre).



### Health Visitor says

Possetting is when a baby brings up small amounts of milk. This is very common in the first few weeks and may be nothing to worry about. If you are worried get advice.

# Being sick

## A problem likely to get better on its own

It's common for babies to be sick - often in the early weeks as they get used to feeding and as their bodies develop. You can tell when your baby is vomiting, rather than just bringing up small amounts of milk, because there will be a lot more coming out. It can be frightening for your baby, so they are likely to cry. Lots of things can cause your baby to be sick.

Being sick often or lots of it, may be due to 'gastric reflux' where acid from the tummy can come up again. Babies can be grumpy and it can sometimes lead to poor feeding. If your baby is feeding well but doesn't seem themselves, you may just need to change the baby's position during a feed to make them more upright. Feeding smaller amounts and more often may also help.



### Stop

I have a new baby.  
I have just given my baby a feed.



### Think

They always seem to bring up small amounts of milk.



### Do

This is known as 'Possetting'. As they develop it will stop naturally. Talk to your Health Visitor.



### Health Visitor says

After the first few months, if your baby is suddenly sick it is more likely to be caused by a stomach virus rather than Possetting. Gastroenteritis is a tummy bug (see [Upset tummy page 32](#)), which can come with diarrhoea (runny poo).

Contact your Health Visitor or NHS Direct on 0845 4647 where you can speak to a trained Nurse.

The above information cannot replace specialist treatment. If you are still worried, contact your Health Visitor or NHS Direct.



### NHS Direct says

If your baby's crying seems different in any way (such as a very high-pitched cry or a whimper), then seek medical advice. Crying can sometimes be a sign that your baby is unwell. Trust your instincts - you know your baby best. If in doubt, call NHS Direct on 0845 4647 where you can speak to a trained Nurse.

# Crying

## Understanding why

All babies cry, especially in the first few weeks after birth. Crying is their way of letting you know they need something or are uncomfortable. They may need changing, they may be hungry or just need a cuddle. Always burp your baby after a feed as this will help.

If your baby cries suddenly and often, but they otherwise appear to be happy and healthy, they may have colic. Colic is common and although uncomfortable it is not serious and usually affects babies only in the first few months of their lives. The most common symptom of colic is continuous crying, which typically occurs in the late afternoon or evening. Other signs include a flushed appearance, drawing their legs to their chest, clenching fists, passing wind and trouble sleeping.

When a baby cries, it can be upsetting. It is very important to stay calm and don't be afraid to ask for help.



### Stop

Is your baby very restless and crying constantly?



### Think

Your baby may need a cuddle and some reassurance.



### Do

Don't worry, keep checking for unusual signs and get support if you feel tired or frustrated.



### Health Visitor says

Finding out why your baby is crying is often a matter of going through all the possible options.

Things to check first are:

- ✓ Does their nappy need changing?
- ✓ Could they be hungry?
- ✓ Could they be too hot?
- ✓ Could they be too cold?

These are simple things which could be causing your baby to cry.

The above information cannot replace specialist treatment. If you are still worried, contact NHS Direct or a Doctor (e.g. your GP or Walk-in Centre).



### Health Visitor's tips



Leave your baby in a warm, safe place with no clothes or a nappy on, to let the air get to their skin.



Use a barrier cream.  
(see Chemist's tips opposite)



Remember to change and check their nappy often.

# Nappy rash

## A common problem that's easy to treat

Nappy rash is very common and can affect lots of babies. It is usually caused when your baby's skin comes into contact with wee and poo that collects in their nappy.

A nappy rash causes your baby's skin to become sore. The skin in this area may be covered in red spots or blotches. You might need to change their nappy more often.

Most nappy rashes can be treated with a simple skincare routine and by using a cream you can get from the Chemist. With a mild nappy rash, your baby won't normally feel too much discomfort.

However, some nappy rashes are more serious and can be caused by something else. A bad rash will be more upsetting for your baby, and may need medical treatment. Talk to your Health Visitor if the problems continue.



### Stop

There is a red, sore rash around the nappy area. Baby is uncomfortable and cries a lot.



### Think

Has your baby been in a dirty nappy for a long period of time?



### Do

Change their nappy often. Speak to your Health Visitor and ask your Chemist about creams.



## Chemist says

Call in and chat to us about creams we can provide you with over the counter.

There are two types of nappy cream available. One is a barrier cream to keep wee away from your baby's skin. The other is a medicated cream, that is good for clearing up any soreness but should only be used when advised by a health professional.

The above information cannot replace specialist treatment. If you are still worried, contact a Chemist or your Health Visitor.



### Health Visitor says

Baby skin is more delicate than ours. Try to limit the amount of products you use on their skin and never leave your baby out in the sun (see [Sun safety page 48](#)).

Cradle Cap needs no specific treatment, although gently washing the baby's hair and scalp may stop build-up of the scale. Use just a small amount of a pure, natural oil - such as olive oil or vegetable oil - on your baby's scalp and leave it on at least 15 minutes before washing it off.

# Rashes & dry skin

## Baby skin needs extra care

A baby's skin is thinner and needs extra care. Dry, flaky skin, some blemishes, blotches and slight rashes are normal in newborns and will naturally clear up. If your baby is otherwise well but has a rash you are worried about contact your Midwife or Health Visitor. Another common rash for babies is heat rash. This mainly appears on the head and neck as tiny red spots and is nothing to worry about. Keep them warm but not hot and try to dress them in natural cotton clothes, with nothing that can rub on their skin.

Your baby may also suffer from something called Cradle Cap. This is the name given to the yellowish, greasy scaly patches on the scalp of newborns and usually appears in the baby's first three months. It can look like a bad case of dandruff and is harmless, it doesn't cause any irritation to your baby and usually clears up by the time they are two years old.



### Stop

Your baby's skin may be flaky and dry.



### Think

Dry skin is common in newborn babies, as their skin is 15 times thinner than that of an adult.



### Do

Avoid soap and using products on your baby's skin. Wash in clean water.



### Doctor says

Contact your Doctor or go to the Emergency Department immediately if your baby has a rash that does not disappear when you press a glass to it. This may be a sign of Meningitis and needs to be seen by a Doctor no matter how well your baby seems.

Seek immediate advice if your baby has a rash and a high temperature or vomiting (see [page 30 for more information on Meningitis](#)).

The above information cannot replace specialist treatment. If you are still worried, contact NHS Direct or a Doctor (e.g. your GP or Walk-in Centre).



# Safer sleeping

## Reducing the risks of cot death

A cot in your room is the safest place for your baby to sleep in their first six months. Keep the cot tidy and do not use plastic sheets. Babies can overheat, so try to keep the room between 16-20°C. Do not use duvets, quilts or pillows until your baby is one year old, and never use hot water bottles or electric blankets. Always position your baby in the 'Feet to Foot' position, with their feet at the foot of the cot so that they can't move down inside their blanket.

Unless a health professional has told you to do something different, always put your baby to sleep on it's back. Never let your baby fall asleep propped up on a cushion, on a sofa or chair, and don't let anyone fall asleep while nursing your baby.



### Stop

Always put your baby to sleep in the 'Back to Sleep' and 'Feet to Foot' position.



### Think

Babies aren't good at keeping their temperature constant, so make sure they don't get too hot or too cold.



### Do

Keep your baby's cot in your room for the first six months.



## Health Visitor says

If you take a baby who cannot sleep into your bed, do not take any medicine, drugs or alcohol that may make you sleep more heavily than usual. Remember that when sleeping next to you your baby will be warmer anyway, so if they fall asleep under your duvet they may get too hot. Be aware that they face a bigger health risk if you or your partner is a smoker.

If you are worried, contact NHS Direct or a doctor (e.g. your GP or Walk-in Centre).



# Sticky eyes

## Common in newborn babies

'Sticky eyes' are common in newborn babies and young children while their tear ducts are developing. You may see some sticky stuff in the corner of the eyes or their eyelashes may be stuck together.

It normally clears up on its own, but you may have to clean your baby's eyes regularly with damp cotton wool. Use clean, cooled boiled water. Wipe each eye from the corner by the nose outwards. Use a clean piece of cotton wool for each wipe.

The signs of 'sticky eyes' can sometimes be confused with an infection called 'Conjunctivitis'. With conjunctivitis the signs are yellowy, green sticky goo which comes back regularly. If you notice this, contact your Health Visitor or Doctor. This can be passed on easily, so wash your hands and use a separate towel for your baby.

### Stop

Is there discharge in the corner of your baby's eye and do their eyelashes appear to be stuck together?

### Think

Sticky eyes is a common condition that affects most babies, speak to your Health Visitor.

### Do

Use cooled boiled water on a clean piece of cotton wool for each wipe.



## Health Visitor says

Cooled boiled water is the best option for cleaning a newborn baby's eyes.

Use clean, cooled boiled water. Wipe each eye from the corner by the nose outwards.



Use a clean piece cotton wool for each wipe. Remember to wash your hands before and afterwards and avoid sharing towels to prevent spreading infection.

The above information cannot replace specialist treatment. If you are still worried, contact NHS Direct or a Doctor (e.g. your GP or Walk-in Centre).



### Health Visitor says

Teething rings give your baby something to safely chew on, which may help to ease their discomfort or pain. Some teething rings can be cooled first in the fridge.

It can help to give your baby something hard to chew on, such as a teething ring, a crust of bread, a breadstick or a stick of peeled carrot (stay nearby in case of choking).

Source: NHS Choices.

# Teething trouble

## Every baby goes through it

A baby's first teeth (known as milk teeth) usually develop before your baby is born. Teeth generally start to show when a child is four to nine months old, although every baby develops at their own pace. This is known as 'teething'. Some babies show few signs while others find it more uncomfortable - they get hot red cheeks, dribble a lot, are not hungry, seem a bit grumpy and chew on everything.

There are ways you can help make teething easier for your baby. Every child is different, and you may have to try a few things until you find one that works for your baby. Try teething gels and teething rings and talk to the Chemist for advice.

Now is a good time to think about your child's tooth care routine. You can brush their teeth with a soft baby toothbrush and baby toothpaste and take them with you when you are going to the Dentist.



### Chemist says

If your baby is uncomfortable, you may want to give them a medicine which has been made for children which you can buy from the Chemist. These medicines contain a small dose of painkiller, such as paracetamol, to help ease any discomfort. The medicine should also be sugar-free. Make sure you read all instructions or ask your Chemist about how to use them.



### Stop

Look for red cheeks and gums, dribbling, off their food, chewing on things and seeming cross.



### Think

Your baby is four to nine months old, and may be teething.



### Do

Ask your Chemist about gels and teething rings. Start your baby's tooth care routine as soon as possible.



The above information cannot replace specialist treatment. If you are still worried, contact a Chemist or your Health Visitor.



### Health Visitor says

It is important to keep them cool, itching gets worse if they are hot. Try calamine lotion (especially at night) to help stop them itching and scratching the blisters which could cause scarring.

# Chickenpox

## Most children will catch it

Chickenpox is a mild disease that most children catch at some point. It takes 10-21 days for the signs to show. If you are sure this is Chickenpox you do not need to go to your Doctor unless your child is very unwell.

Chickenpox is most common in children who are between two and eight years old. They can pass it on to others from about two days before the rash appears until roughly five days after. The rash usually appears on the chest and back. You and your child should stay away from other people until all of the blisters have fully burst and dried which usually happens five to seven days after the first blister appears. You can take them out if they are well enough, but be careful to keep away from other people. After the last blister has burst and dried, they are no longer likely to pass the infection on.

Chickenpox spreads from spit, snot in sneezes and coughs from a person who has Chickenpox.



### Stop

Do they have an itchy rash (looks like blisters) mainly on the chest and back?



### Think

Chickenpox is a common illness among children, particularly those under age eight.



### Do

Stay away from others until the blisters have dried. Call NHS Direct for advice on how to care for your child.



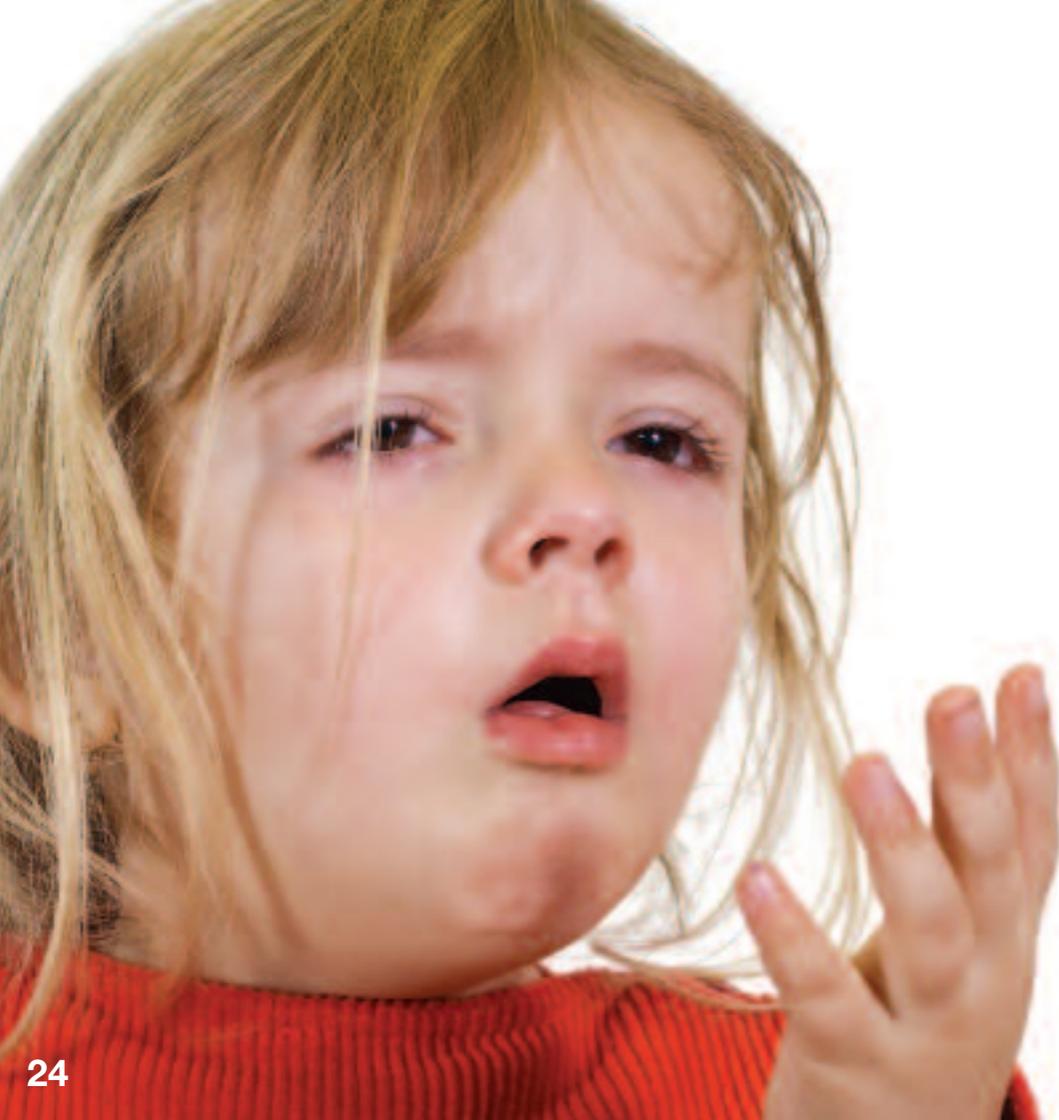
### Doctor says

After having Chickenpox, the virus stays in the body. Later in life the virus can come back in a different form known as Shingles.

Chickenpox is easy to pass on to someone who has not had it before. If your child has Chickenpox keep them away from others.

If you are pregnant it is likely that you are immune to Chickenpox. However, please contact your Midwife for advice.

The above information cannot replace specialist treatment. Contact NHS Direct if you are worried.



# Coughs & colds



## A cuddle can go a long way

There are some good things about children catching a few coughs and colds it helps them build-up natural defences and fight off viruses.

Most bugs will run their course without doing any real harm because they are viruses which get better on their own, however there are things you can do at home to help:

- ✓ Give your child lots to drink.
- ✓ Try infant paracetamol (not aspirin).
- ✓ Keep them away from smoke, do not let people smoke at home, around your child or come into contact with your child if they have recently smoked.
- ✓ Keep calm - a cuddle goes a long way.
- ✓ Talk to your Chemist but remember that coughing is the body's way of keeping the lungs clear.

### Don't pass it on:

**Catch it** Germs spread easily. Always carry tissues and use them to catch coughs or sneezes.

**Bin it** Germs can live for several hours on tissues. Dispose of your tissue as soon as possible.

**Kill it** Hands can pass on germs to everything you touch. Clean your hands as soon as you can.

### Chemist says

Children can also be treated using over the counter painkillers to help to bring down a raised temperature. Some are available as a liquid for children and can be given from the age of about three months. Check with the Chemist and tell them how old your child is. Always check with your Chemist if you aren't sure which treatments you can give your child.



### Stop

Is your child coughing and sneezing, has a mild temperature and seems a bit poorly?



### Think

It's probably no more than a cold and just need a bit of extra comfort, drinks and rest.



### Do

Ask the Chemist for advice on painkillers and keep an eye on them in case things get worse.

The above information cannot replace specialist treatment. If you are still worried, contact NHS Direct or a Doctor (e.g. your GP or Walk-in Centre).



# Ear problems

## Baby's ears need to be treated with care

Babies may develop some sort of ear problem at certain times. Most children have grown out of ear infections by the age of seven. Most ear infections are caused by a virus which will get better by itself and will not need antibiotics.

Babies have some natural protection against infections in the first few weeks - this is boosted by breastfeeding. In babies and toddlers, bacteria pass from the nose to the ears more easily. Ear infections can be painful and your child may just need extra cuddles and painkillers from the Chemist. Your child may have swollen glands in their neck - this is the body's way of fighting infection.

Children who live in households where people smoke (passive smoking) or who have a lot of contact with other children, like those who go to nursery, are more likely to get ear infections. Speak to your Health Visitor about safely cleaning your baby's ears as they can be easily damaged.

### What are the signs of an ear infection?

The signs are a raised temperature, general irritability and pain or discomfort. They may even have a pus-like discharge, which can also be associated with a blocked feeling in the ear or hearing loss. Although most ear infections settle down without any serious effects, there can be mild hearing loss for a short time (two to three weeks).



### Stop

They are hot, grumpy, have swollen glands, are off their food and have a cold.



### Think

Your child has lots of contact with other children. They may have an ear infection.



### Do

Go to your Doctor, who will look at your child's ears to try to find the cause of the problem.



### Health Visitor's tips

- ✓ A baby's ears need to be treated with care when cleaning.
- ✓ Never use a cotton bud inside your child's ear.
- ✓ If they have a temperature wax may flow out.
- ✓ Use different, clean damp cotton wool on each ear to gently clean around the outer area.

The above information cannot replace specialist treatment. If you are still worried, contact NHS Direct or a Doctor (e.g. your GP or Walk-in Centre).



### NHS Direct says

As well as a high temperature, other signs of a fever include red cheeks, being grumpy, crying, sweating and tiredness. If your child is unusually sleepy, or has other signs, such as an unusual rash, headache, neck stiffness or difficulty breathing then call NHS Direct on 0845 4647 where you can speak to a trained nurse.

# Fever

## Over 38°C means a fever

A normal temperature is between 36-36.8°C (96.8-98.24°F). In children, any temperature of 38°C (100.4°F) or above is considered high and is classed as a fever. To find out if your child has a fever, there are different kinds of thermometers, these include digital thermometers, ear thermometers and skin-strip thermometers ([see page 6 for more information](#)).

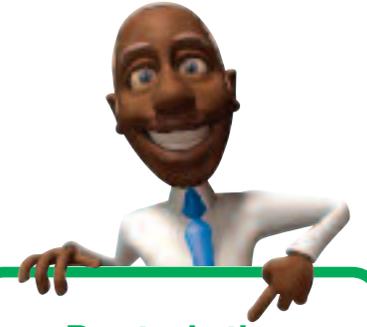
A baby can't regulate their own body temperature and can easily get too hot. Teething can also cause a slight rise in temperature and it is also common for babies and children to get a fever within 48 hours of being immunised. Whenever a baby or toddler has a high temperature keep an eye out for any developments.

Fever can often be treated at home with infant paracetamol (not aspirin) which you can get from the Chemist.



### There are certain times when your child should see or contact a Doctor:

- If your baby is under three months and has a temperature of over 38°C (100.4°F) or is three to six months and still has a temperature higher than 39°C (102.2°F) an hour after they have taken the correct dose of infant paracetamol.
- If they are being sick without diarrhoea, or develop a rash as well as a fever.
- If they drink less than usual, wee less than usual and are unusually sleepy.
- Being unwell for some time.



### Doctor's tips

There are things you can do at home to help:

- ✓ Take all their clothes off except the nappy.
- ✓ Try to keep them cool.
- ✓ Use infant paracetamol (not aspirin).
- ✓ Keep them in a well ventilated room.
- ✓ Give them a cool bath.

If after an hour or so there is no improvement get more help.

The above information cannot replace specialist treatment. If you are still worried, contact NHS Direct or a Doctor (e.g. your GP or Walk-in Centre).



### The glass test

The glass test is a really useful way of spotting suspected Meningitis. If your child has a cluster of red or purple spots, press the side of a clear drinking glass firmly against the rash.

**Go straight to the Emergency Department**



In this example the spots are still visible through the glass. Contact a Doctor immediately (e.g. your GP or Walk-in Centre). If you cannot get help straight away go to the Emergency Department.



In this example the spots under the glass have virtually disappeared. It is unlikely to be Meningitis but if you are still worried contact NHS Direct, your Doctor or go to the Emergency Department.

# Meningitis

## A serious illness

Meningitis is a swelling around the brain. It's a very serious illness, but if it's treated early most children make a full recovery.

**You should always treat any case of suspected Meningitis as an emergency.**

Early signs may be like having a cold or flu. Children with Meningitis can become seriously ill very fast, so make sure you can spot the signs. Your child may have a cluster of red or purple spots. Do the glass test. This rash can be harder to see on darker skin, so check for spots over your baby or child's whole body as it can start anywhere (check lightest areas first).

**The presence of fever and any other of the above symptoms should be taken extremely seriously. Not all children will show all the signs listed on the right.**



### Doctor says

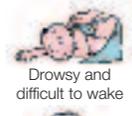
Look and learn about the signs below; if any are present contact a Doctor.



Fever, cold hands and feet



Floppy and unresponsive



Drowsy and difficult to wake



Spots/rash. Do the glass test



Rapid breathing or grunting



Fretful, dislikes being handled



Unusual cry or moaning



### Stop

Is your child showing signs like those in the box on the right?



### Think

You should always treat any case of suspected Meningitis as an emergency.



### Do

Do the glass test. **If spots do not change colour treat as an emergency and get help now.**

If you are worried, contact a Doctor (e.g. your GP or Walk-in Centre). If you cannot get help straight away go to the Emergency Department.



### Chemist's tips

There are lots of ways you can care for your child at home.

Things to try are :

- ✓ Give them regular drinks - try small amounts of cold water.
- ✓ Being extra careful with hand hygiene (use soap and water and dry hands well with a clean towel).
- ✓ Rehydrating solutions come in pre-measured sachets to mix with water. It helps with dehydration.

If your child is unwell for more than 24 hours see your Doctor. If your baby is newborn or very unwell contact your Doctor straight away.

# Upset tummy

## Not nice for you or your baby

Sickness and diarrhoea bugs are caught easily and are often passed on in places where there are lots of children - like playgroups or nurseries.

Feeling sick and suddenly being sick are normally the first signs. Diarrhoea (runny poo) can follow afterwards. Take them see your Doctor if they are unwell for longer than 24 hours or sooner if they are newborn or if you notice signs of dehydration. ➡

If you're breastfeeding, keep on doing so. Offer older children plenty of water, or an ice-lolly for them to suck. If they want to eat, give them plain foods like pasta or boiled rice (nothing too rich or salty).

Keep them away from others who may pick up infection. Be extra careful with everyone's handwashing. Clean your home carefully on a regular basis with disinfectant and a cleaning solution.



### Stop

Your child is being sick and/or has runny poo.



### Think

To help, get them to drink lots. They most probably have a tummy upset.



### Do

Go to your Doctor if they are unwell for longer than 24 hours. Keep them away from others.

### Signs of dehydration

- ✓ Sunken fontanelle (i.e. the soft spot is more dipped in than usual).
- ✓ Less wet nappies (i.e. they wee less).
- ✓ More sleepy than usual.
- ✓ Runny poo.
- ✓ Dry mouth.

The above information cannot replace specialist treatment. If you are still worried, contact a Chemist or a Doctor (e.g. your GP or Walk-in Centre).



### Midwife says

Newborns often have unusual breathing patterns and most babies have a stuffy nose for the first several weeks of life. Newborn babies breathe much faster than older children.

### Health Visitor says

Make sure your baby or toddler has not swallowed something they should not have like a plastic toy. If this happens and they appear to be choking get help straight away.



#### Stop

Is your child a typical, active toddler?



#### Think

Have they been running around?



#### Do

Sit them down and let them get their breath back.

# Wheezing & breathing difficulties

## Look at the signs

Any kind of breathing difficulty your infant or child experiences can be scary for parents. It may be nothing to worry about and could just be normal baby 'snuffles'.

### Use your instincts with newborns and babies. It could be:

- Rapid breathing or panting, which is common. There is no other sign of illness, it comes and goes and your baby is breathing comfortably most of the time, there's normally no need to worry.
- Breathing may sound a bit rattly. Try holding your baby upright and letting them sleep upright in your arms.
- Occasional, coughing or choking which may occur when a baby takes in milk too quickly with feeds. Try to slow things down a bit.
- A cold or mild cough. Keep an eye on them at this stage and use your instincts. If you are worried talk to your Health Visitor or call NHS Direct.

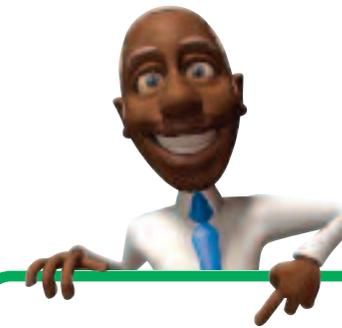
### In older babies and toddlers you may notice:

- Coughing, runny nose, mild temperature - (see page 24 Coughs & colds).
- Croup (hoarse voice, barking cough) needs to be assessed by a Doctor and may need treating with steroids.
- Their lips and nose appear a blue colour.

While you are contacting a Doctor try sitting with them in a steamy bathroom - do not leave your child alone.

If you're worried about your child wheezing or having breathing difficulties even after reading this, contact a Doctor immediately.

The above information cannot replace specialist treatment. If you are still worried, contact NHS Direct or a Doctor (e.g. your GP or Walk-in Centre).



### Doctor's tips

You need to get advice immediately if your baby or toddler:

- ✓ Seems to find breathing hard work and they are sucking in their ribs and tummy.
- ✓ Their chest looks like it is 'caving in.'
- ✓ Their skin turns a blue colour especially lips and nose.
- ✓ They can't complete a full sentence without stopping to take a breath.



### Keeping them safe

Being a toddler means they are discovering the world around them. This can result in bumps and bruises. It is almost impossible to prevent every accident although there are things we can do at home which might help.

Think about safety gates, corner cushions for sharp furniture, cupboard locks, fire guards, window locks and non slip bath mats.

**Remember to keep hot drinks out of children's reach.**

# Bumps & bruises

## Part of growing up

Minor cuts, bumps and bruises are a normal part of growing up. Allowing them to explore the world around them (with supervision) helps them develop and learn. Most of your toddler's bumps will require no more than a cuddle to make them better. You will quickly be able to tell by the noise of the bang, the reaction of your child and the colour of the area affected, which are the more serious bumps.

If it looks like the bump may swell then use a cold flannel (soaking the cloth with cold water) or ice pack (but don't put ice directly onto the skin) to help reduce swelling and to cool the area for at least a few minutes.

If your child has had a bump to the head and it looks serious or symptoms worsen call NHS Direct. Read the information on the right. ➡  
If your child is under a year old and has a bump on the head please seek advice from a Doctor.



### Stop

My child has had quite a hard bump to the head. I have used a cold flannel on the bump.



### Think

They are tired. They have gone to sleep. This is normal after an upset.



### Do

Check regularly that they are okay and behaving as usual.

## Head injury

One of the signs of a severe head injury is being unusually sleepy, this does not mean you cannot let your child sleep.

You need to get medical attention if:

- They are vomiting.
- They are complaining it hurts.
- They are not responding at all.

If they are tired from what's happened, or from crying, then it is fine to let them sleep. If you are worried in any way about their drowsiness, then you should wake your child an hour after they go to sleep.

Check that they are okay, and that they are responding normally throughout the night.

If you are still worried, contact a Doctor (e.g. your GP or Walk-in Centre). If you cannot get help straight away go to the Emergency Department.



# Burns & scalds

## Knowing what to do

A burn is damage to the skin, which is caused by direct contact with something hot. Burns can also be caused by certain chemicals, electricity and friction. A scald is a burn that is caused by a hot liquid or steam. Scalds are treated in the same way as burns. Treat any burn or scald straight after the accident but always take your child to hospital for anything more than a very small burn or scald. A baby's skin is very delicate and can be scarred without the right treatment.

Cool the burnt area and place under cool running water for at least ten minutes. When the burn has cooled cover it with a sterile dressing, food quality cling film or a plastic bag. Don't wrap it too tightly. Then take your child to hospital.



### Stop

Treat the burn or scald straight after the accident.



### Think

Do not use creams, lotions or ointments on the burn or scald.



### Do

Always take a your child or baby to A&E.



## A&E says

Remove any hot clothing that is not stuck to the skin and hold the affected area under cold, running water for at least ten minutes. Cover the scald or burn with a clean, non-fluffy cloth that has been soaked in cold water. Don't apply fatty substances like butter or ointment as this won't do any good and will only waste time for hospital staff who'll have to clean the area before it can be treated.

If you are still worried, contact a Doctor (e.g. your GP or Walk-in Centre). If you cannot get help straight away go to A&E.



# Domestic violence

## Keeping your child safe

Domestic violence is a crime and a major social problem affecting many families. Children who see, get involved or hear violence are affected in many ways. What is certain is that children do hear, they do see and they are aware of violence in the family. Children will learn how to act from what their parents do. Domestic violence teaches children bad things about relationships and how to deal with people.

If you are worried about domestic violence, discuss it with someone else, such as your health visitor or the Domestic Violence helpline\*. If you are violent and have children, you can seek help to stop what is happening.

Protecting children is everybody's business and adults have a responsibility to report any abuse. Act now, as abuse can have serious long-term consequences.



### Stop

Adults have a responsibility to report abuse.



### Think

There are many possible signs of abuse, ranging from injury to changes in the way a child is acting.



### Do

Get help if you need it from NHS websites and speak to your practice nurse.

There may be times when a child or young person may be at risk of significant harm and professional support is needed. It is best that action is taken early to stop things getting worse. Long-term abuse is much more likely to cause problems for a child or young person as they get older. Even if you think an incident is just a one-off, other professional agencies may already have concerns. So your information could be very important.

\*You can call the free 24 hour National Domestic Violence helpline on 0808 2000 247.



### Health Visitor says

Smoking at home can lead to health problems. This is called passive smoking and it means you are forcing your child to breathe in your smoke. Even if you smoke outside it can still damage their health. If you or your partner smoke, never share a bed with your child.

If you want to give up smoking, visit <http://smokefree.nhs.uk>

# Healthy lifestyles

## Start healthy habits early in life

With healthy habits from birth, you can give your baby a good start for a healthy and happy future. Breast milk is ideal for your baby's growing needs and giving them breast milk can make a big difference. If you are not as healthy as you could be, now could be a great time to establish good healthy habits for all the family.

Babies like the foods they get used to. If you give them lots of different, healthy foods to try when they are babies and toddlers, they are more likely to eat a variety of healthy foods as they grow up.

Being active takes brain and muscle power so it plays an important part in your baby's development. As they grow, you can help them by playing with them and helping them make new movements and explore their surroundings. The whole family can enjoy a healthy lifestyle together.



### Stop

Do you drink too much alcohol, take drugs or smoke?



### Think

You may be passing these habits onto your child. Now is the time to get healthy together.



### Do

Get help if you need it from NHS websites and speak to your Doctor.

Here are some basic rules to follow to help you lead a healthier lifestyle:

- ✓ Your good health habits will become your child's good health habits.
- ✓ Keep active together.
- ✓ Drink alcohol with caution, know the limits.
- ✓ Do not smoke or take drugs, if you do, get help to give up.
- ✓ There are vitamins and healthy food vouchers available. These are sometimes free.
- ✓ Eat lots of fruit and vegetables.



### Health Visitor says

Make sure you keep your child's Red Book in a safe place. It is your only complete record of their childhood immunisations and they are often needed later in life.

### NHS Direct says

If you have any questions or concerns about childhood immunisation and vaccines in the UK, then call NHS Direct on 0845 4647 or visit [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk) or [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

# Immunisations

## Protect your child now and in the future

Immunisations, also known as vaccinations are usually given by injection. Children in the UK are offered vaccinations against a variety of diseases as part of the Healthy Child Programme. You can get advice on the vaccinations from your family Doctor or Health Visitor. A record is kept in the Parent Held Child Health Record (Red Book), which is a book you keep containing information on your child's health.

Immunisations are mainly given during the first five years. It's important to have vaccinations at the right age to keep the risk of disease as low as possible. It is normal to worry about vaccinations, so don't hesitate to ask your Health Visitor or Doctor for advice - that's what they are there for! Childhood immunisations are free and most are given at your Doctor's surgery.

Some immunisations are given more than once, to make sure the protection continues. This is known as a booster, so make sure your child gets it.



### Stop

Immunisation begins at two months, when baby's natural immunity to illness, begins to drop.



### Think

Immunisations don't just protect your child during childhood, they protect them for life.



### Do

Your Health Visitor will tell you when local immunisation sessions are taking place.



### Doctor says

Immunisations are used to protect children from diseases which can be very serious and sometimes even cause death.

The protection immunisations offer your child are worth the small amount of pain.

It is important your child's vaccinations are kept up-to-date.



If you are worried, contact your Doctor or Health Visitor.



# Sleeping difficulties

## How can I help my child?

Newborn babies sleep for up to 16 hours a day, and at first they will wake every two or three hours to feed.

At about six weeks you should try introducing a bedtime routine for your baby. Try to do the same things every night, as getting into a rhythm will make your baby feel relaxed and secure.

After about four months babies should start sleeping for longer periods, and by about six to eight months, your baby can probably manage without a night feed and may sleep for six to eight hours without waking.

When you put your baby to bed, put pyjamas and a fresh nappy on them and place them into bed on their back. You may also like to sing them a lullaby or read them a bedtime story.



### Stop

Stay calm and take a few minutes to compose yourself if you feel you need to.



### Think

Remember that every child's sleep pattern is different.



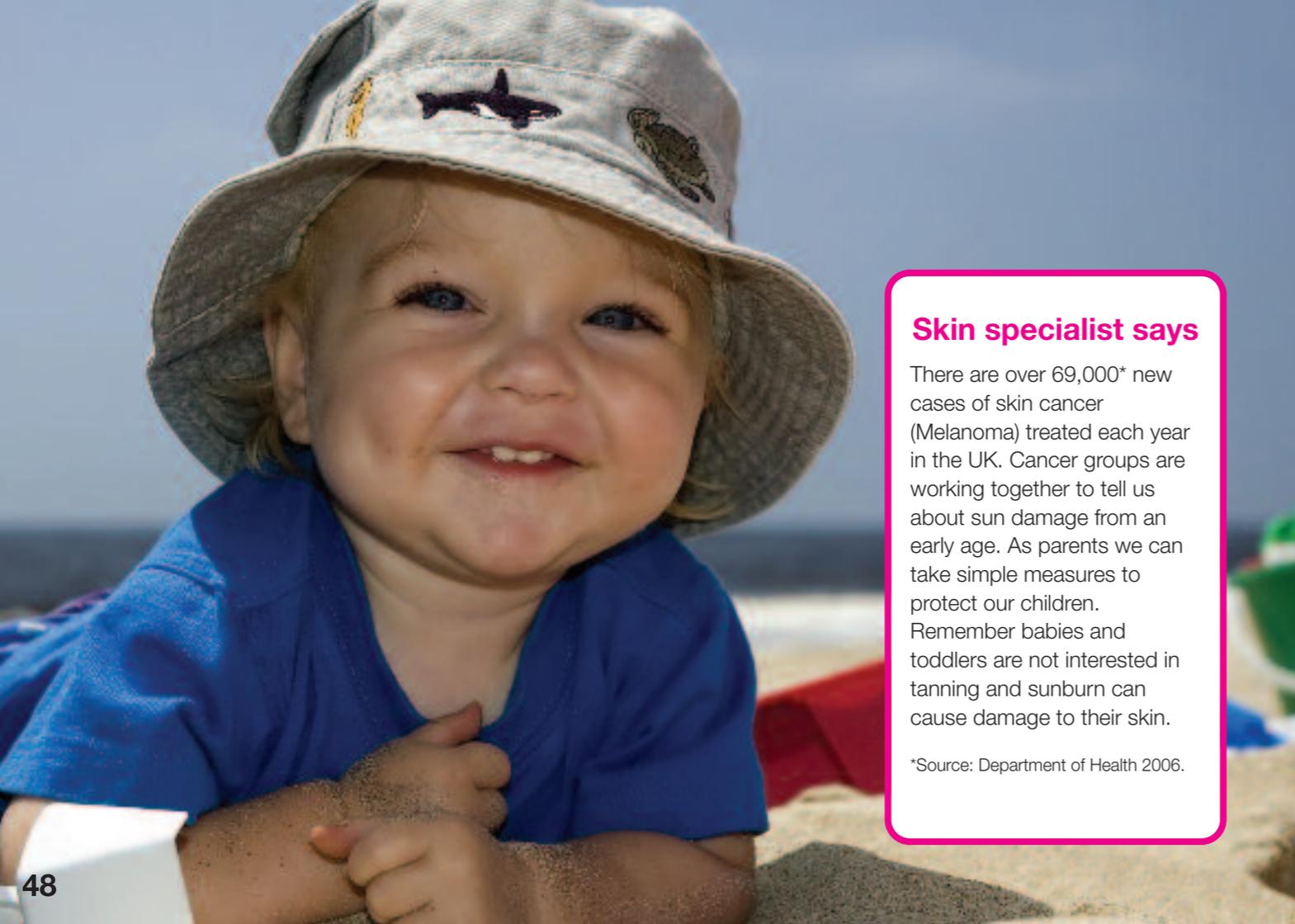
### Do

Introduce a routine as early as six weeks if you can.

## Tips to encourage sleeping

- ✓ Develop a consistent bedtime routine from an early age.
- ✓ Create a calm and relaxed place to sleep.
- ✓ Reduce stimulation - if necessary remove toys that may get them excited rather than signal time to sleep. Read a bedtime story.
- ✓ Make sure that your baby's room is neither too hot nor too cold (recommended room temperature is 16-20°C or 61-68°F).

If you are worried, contact your Doctor or Health Visitor.



### Skin specialist says

There are over 69,000\* new cases of skin cancer (Melanoma) treated each year in the UK. Cancer groups are working together to tell us about sun damage from an early age. As parents we can take simple measures to protect our children. Remember babies and toddlers are not interested in tanning and sunburn can cause damage to their skin.

\*Source: Department of Health 2006.

# Sun safety

## Fresh air is great but the sun can burn

Keep your child cool and protect them from the sun and heat. Babies under six months should be kept out of direct sunlight and older children should be allowed in the sun for a limited time and be well protected. Stay out of the sun, especially during the middle of the day. All types of skin, fair or dark need protection.

Attach a sunshade to the pushchair to keep them out of direct sunlight. A sunhat, with a wide brim or a long flap at the back, will protect your child's head and neck from the sun. Hair does not stop the head from burning. Apply sunscreen regularly, particularly if your child is in and out of the sea or a paddling pool.

If your baby is over six months old, encourage them to drink water. Try giving them tiny pieces of ice and fruit juice lollies. For older toddlers and children, plenty of fruit will also help to keep their fluid levels up.



### Stop

It is a bright day and your child is playing outside.



### Think

Are they in the shade and wearing sunscreen? Are they wearing a hat, long sleeves and trousers?



### Do

Make sure you protect your child's skin and eyes especially during the middle of the day.



### Chemist says

The higher the SPF (Sun Protection Factor) the better protection for the skin. You should use a complete sunblock on your baby or toddler. SPFs of up to 60 are available and these block out almost all of the sun's rays. Even with sunscreen keep them in the shade whenever you can and make sure newborn babies are never in the sun. Don't forget to protect their eyes with sunglasses you can buy from the Chemist.

# Useful contacts

## National contacts

### Baby LifeCheck

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

### British Nutrition Foundation

020 7404 6504

[www.nutrition.org.uk](http://www.nutrition.org.uk)

### National Domestic Violence Helpline

0808 2000 247

[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

<http://refuge.org.uk>

### NHS Choices

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### NHS Direct

0845 4647

[www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

### NHS LifeCheck

[www.nhs.uk/LifeCheck](http://www.nhs.uk/LifeCheck)

### NHS Live well

[www.nhs.uk/Livewell/childhealth0-1](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/childhealth0-1)

[www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood)

### NHS Smokefree

0800 022 4 332

<http://smokefree.nhs.uk>

### Parent Direct

0800 29 89 121

[www.parentdirect.org.uk](http://www.parentdirect.org.uk)

### Parentline Plus

0808 800 2222

[www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)

### The Meningitis Trust

0800 028 18 28

[www.meningitis-trust.org](http://www.meningitis-trust.org)

### Other useful websites

[www.nhs.uk/start4life](http://www.nhs.uk/start4life)

[www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk](http://www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk)

[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

[www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

## Local contacts

### Family Information Service

Wigan CIS

Tel: 01942 486960

[careforkids@wlct.org](mailto:careforkids@wlct.org)

[www.wlct.org/cis](http://www.wlct.org/cis)

### Local NHS Services

Find your nearest GP, hospital, Dentist, pharmacist or optician at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Find and Choose Services.

### Walk-in Centres

These can give health information advice and can treat minor illnesses and injuries.

### Leigh NHS Walk-In Centre

Leigh Infirmary, The Avenue, Leigh, WN7 1HS

Tel: 01942 264000

Open from 7.00am to 9.00pm, 7 days a week

No appointment necessary.

### Out of Hours

The Out of Hours (OOH) Service provides medical assistance by offering telephone advice from GPs and, at limited times, from Nurses along with face to face consultations either at home or the Primary Care Centre at Incefield House. The hours of operation are weekdays 6.30pm until 8.00am the following morning and 24 hours at weekends and Bank Holidays.

Patients should normally ring their own GP practice. An answer-phone message gives details of the telephone number to access the OOH service.

### What should I do if I can't reach my GP?

**Contact NHS Direct on 0845 4647 anytime of the day or night.**

You can now access NHS Direct through your digital television. Simply press the interactive button on your remote control and scroll down to NHS Direct Interactive. For deaf people or those hard of hearing there is a textphone service available on 0845 606 46 47.

### Want to share your views and experiences on local health and social care issues and services?

#### Wigan LINKs

1st Floor Office

CT3 Investment Centre

Waterside Drive

Wigan WN3 5BA

Tel: 01942 705522/705839

[www.wigan.gov.uk/Services/HealthSocialCare/LinkS/](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/Services/HealthSocialCare/LinkS/)

### Free Pharmacy Minor Ailment Scheme

The minor Ailment scheme is run through pharmacies in NHS ALW and has been set up to enable those patients entitled to free prescriptions to obtain medication from their pharmacy free of charge. This should enable these patients to treat minor, short-term conditions themselves without the need for a doctors appointment and with occurring extra costs. Many of the ailments included in the scheme will be used in the treatment of childhood illnesses e.g. colds, high temperatures, head lice, nappy rash, teething.

For more information please go to [www.alwpct.nhs.uk](http://www.alwpct.nhs.uk) Pharmacy (chemist services)

# Useful contacts

## National contacts

### Baby LifeCheck

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

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020 7404 6504

[www.nutrition.org.uk](http://www.nutrition.org.uk)

### National Domestic Violence Helpline

0808 2000 247

[www.womensaid.org.uk](http://www.womensaid.org.uk)

<http://refuge.org.uk>

### NHS Choices

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### NHS Direct

0845 4647

[www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

### NHS LifeCheck

[www.nhs.uk/LifeCheck](http://www.nhs.uk/LifeCheck)

### NHS Live well

[www.nhs.uk/Livewell/childhealth0-1](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/childhealth0-1)

[www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood)

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<http://smokefree.nhs.uk>

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0800 29 89 121

[www.parentdirect.org.uk](http://www.parentdirect.org.uk)

### Parentline Plus

0808 800 2222

[www.parentlineplus.org.uk](http://www.parentlineplus.org.uk)

### The Meningitis Trust

0800 028 18 28

[www.meningitis-trust.org](http://www.meningitis-trust.org)

### Other useful websites

[www.nhs.uk/start4life](http://www.nhs.uk/start4life)

[www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk](http://www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk)

[www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk)

[www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

## Local contacts

### St Helens Family Information Service

Tel: 0800 952 9523

[fis@sthelens.gov.uk](mailto:fis@sthelens.gov.uk)

[www.sthelens.gov.uk](http://www.sthelens.gov.uk)

### Local NHS Services

Find your nearest GP, hospital, Dentist, pharmacist or optician at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

Find and Choose Services.

### Walk-in Centres

These can give health information advice and can treat minor illnesses and injuries.

### St Helens NHS Walk-In Centre and Minor Injuries Unit

Millenium Building, Corporation Street, St. Helens, Merseyside, WA10 1HJ

Tel: 01744 627400

Open Monday to Saturday

7.00am to 10.00pm, and

Sundays 9.00am to 10.00pm.

### Out of Hours

If you are calling out of normal surgery hours - during the evening, at night, during weekends and on bank holidays - all GPs operate an out of hours emergency service. However, this service should only be used if you have an urgent medical problem that cannot wait until normal surgery hours. To access this service call your normal GP's surgery number.

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### Want to share your views and experiences on local health and social care issues and services?

#### St Helens LINK

St Helens District CVS  
4th Floor Tontine House  
24 Church Street  
St Helens  
WA10 1BD  
Tel: 01744 457100  
[www.linksthelens.org.uk](http://www.linksthelens.org.uk)