

Sometimes when your child is ill, it is important to call the doctor immediately. Other times, it's okay to wait. Often just knowing about common illnesses and simple treatments prepares you to care for your child without making a visit to the doctor. Since you know your child better than anyone else, it's okay to call your health care provider if you are concerned about your child's health **for any reason**. We think this pamphlet will help you decide what's best when your child is ill.

#### **BE SURE TO CALL YOUR DOCTOR IF YOUR CHILD:**

- is unusually irritable, confused, drowsy and complains of not feeling well
- has a sudden high fever, stiff neck or back
- has changes in appearance like flushed, hot, dry skin, or is sweating and pale with cold skin
- is unusually quiet or unhappy
- is breathing with difficulty, or unable to swallow
- cries if touched or moved
- has purple spots on his skin
- looks or acts very sick
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#### **WHEN YOU CALL YOUR DOCTOR:**

- write down what you want your doctor to know
- be specific about what is wrong, temperature, recent exposure to disease and medications given
- know the name of your drug store
- write down your doctor's instructions and read them back

**A BLOCKED TEAR DUCT** can occur from birth to one month of age. The channel that carries tears from eye to nose is blocked. Baby's eye is watery.

- Call the doctor if the eyelids are stuck together with yellow drainage, especially after naps; if eyelids are red or swollen, or if baby's eyes are red or pink, or if your child still has watery eyes at one year of age.

**FAILURE TO MOVE AN EXTREMITY** may be a sign of a broken bone, dislocation, or nerve injury.

- Contact your doctor.

#### **HEADACHE can be a sign of a serious problem.**

- Call the doctor if sudden onset, getting worse, high fever is present, or the infant/child has vomiting, is lethargic or unusually irritable, eating poorly, has a skin rash, is dizzy or confused, or has a seizure.

**TEETHING** is how new teeth work their way through the gums. The first tooth may appear anytime between the ages of 3 months to 1 year, and can cause mild gum pain.

- Call the doctor if you have concerns about the way your baby is acting.

**THRUSH** is caused by a yeast infection in the mouth. White patches that will not wipe off are seen on the tongue and inside of the mouth.

- Take your child to the doctor for medication.

**COLDS** are viral infections of the nose and throat. Colds can be safely treated at home.

- Encourage rest and lots of fluids.
- Use a cool mist vaporizer.
- **Call the doctor** if your child has a fever more than 3 days, discharge lasts more than 7 days or becomes thick and yellow, eyes have yellow drainage, or you feel your child is worse.

**COUGHING** may occur as part of a cold.

- Use a cool mist vaporizer.
- Encourage rest and fluids.
- **Call the doctor** if breathing becomes difficult and is not better after clearing the nose or if the child acts in a way that concerns you. Concerns include sudden onset, fatigue, irritability, feeding problems, fever, difficulty breathing, wheezing, or if the child can't get a breath.

**CONSTIPATION** is infrequent bowel movements with stools that are hard and hard to pass.

- Add strained foods such as apricots, prunes, pears, peas, or spinach twice daily if baby is more than 4 months old.
- Add diluted prune or apple juice up to 4 oz. a day, if baby is 5 months old or older.
- Encourage prunes, raisins, peaches, peas, broccoli, and bran foods if child is more than 1 year old.
- Encourage water to drink.
- **Call the doctor** if child is less than 4 months old or if child has pain or bleeding with bowel movement, sudden onset, or occurs frequently.



**DIARRHEA** is a sudden increase in frequency, amount and looseness of bowel movements.

- Call the doctor if the child has not had wet diapers for 8 hours or has reduced urine; has no saliva or tears; has a bowel movement every hour for more than 8 hours; or loose watery stools for 24 hours; has blood in the stool, or stool is watery and foul-smelling; or fever, stomach pain, or vomiting is present.
- Encourage fluids. Call the doctor for diet instructions.
- To increase diet after an illness for an infant 5 months or older, add bananas, applesauce and pureed rice. In an 8 month or older baby, add bananas, rice, applesauce, toast and yogurt.
- For a baby or infant, contact your doctor.

**VOMITING** is usually caused by an infection of the stomach. It usually stops in 6-24 hours.

- Offer clear fluids until 8 hours have passed without vomiting (start with sips and increase).
- Offer bland foods when child has not vomited for 8 hours. (For infants who have been taking solids, start with applesauce, bananas, rice, and cereal. For older children, start with rice, crackers, mashed potatoes, and white bread.)
- One episode of vomiting in a baby who otherwise appears healthy is not a cause for alarm. However, if the vomiting continues more than the usual spit-up, or if the infant is sick, call your doctor.
- **Call the doctor** if child is very drowsy, has a headache, stomach pain, high fever, is yellow, or is acting in a way that concerns you.

**CHICKENPOX** is caused by a virus. Two weeks after contact with a sick person, an itchy red rash breaks out on the face, scalp, chest and back. Spots become fluid-filled and turn crusty in about 24 hours. The rash continues to break out for 1-5 days. Fever can also develop.

- Keep child from others until spots crust as he/she is contagious.
- Cool baths may help ease the itching.
- Call the doctor if scabs have drainage, or if fever lasts more than 4 days.

**JAUNDICE** (yellowing of the skin) is common beginning the second or third day of life and continuing the first week of life. If jaundice is present, or other abnormal symptoms are present, or the stool is light and the urine is dark, call the doctor. Jaundice which develops one week after birth may be due to an infection or another illness; contact your physician.

**FEVER** helps your child fight infections. To take a child's temperature with a glass thermometer, "shake down" thermometer to 96.0° F. Rectal or armpit (axillary) temperatures should be taken on babies and children up to 4-5 years old. Your child has a fever if the temperature is greater than 100.4°. Remember, the axillary (armpit) method is the least accurate.

- Fever in children is a cue to look for other signs of illness, such as:
  - Loss of appetite
  - Vomiting or stomach pain
  - Irritability
  - Unusual sleepiness
  - Severe headache
  - Persistent crying
  - Inability to swallow
  - Sore throat
  - Difficulty breathing
  - Ear pain
  - Pain with urination
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- **Call the doctor** if the child is less than 3 months old with a fever, or an older child with a temperature of 102° F or greater. Sudden onset of fever is important.
  - **Call your doctor** if other signs of illness are present, especially if the infant or child has a fever.
  - Remember in the first few months of life, an infection may not cause fever. The key is how the baby acts. If he or she is more listless than normal or if a fever is present, contact your health care provider.

#### MEDICATION TIPS

- Follow all directions
- Keep out of reach of children
- Never give someone else's medicines to your child
- Be sure to finish the prescription even if your child is better
- Do not use aspirin for your infant, child or adolescent

## KNOW YOUR POISON CONTROL NUMBER!

1-800-222-1222

(National toll free hotline, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.)

Also,  
Devos Children's Hospital Regional  
Poison Control Center is available online:  
[poisoncenter.devoschildrens.org](http://poisoncenter.devoschildrens.org)



1-800-432-4121

[www.nwhealth.org](http://www.nwhealth.org)

Antrim County (Bellaire)	(231) 533-8670
Antrim County (Mancelona)	(231) 587-5044
Charlevoix County	(231) 547-6523
Emmet County	(231) 347-6014
Otsego County	(989) 732-1794



## When your child is ill...



- Excessive crying or whimpering may indicate illness, especially if there are other symptoms. If nothing you do (burping, rocking, walking) helps, and crying continues for 2-3 hours, contact your doctor.
- Breathing difficulty is a sign of illness. If the baby is congested, wheezing, or having difficulty breathing, there may be a respiratory problem. Sneezing is common and normal. Cough is not normal in newborns.
- Lethargy may be a worrisome sign. If your child is suddenly uninterested, limp, difficult to awaken, and sleeping more than usual, an infection or illness could be present.
- Loss of appetite occurs in most sick newborns. A baby who has been eating well, but suddenly refuses the bottle or breast may be sick.