

# KID CRUD

## Top five children's ailments to watch for in Katy this year

Written by Lana Timbs

Being sick is no fun for families, and is often inevitable. Katy doctors and pediatricians see certain illnesses often. Learn more about some of these common diagnoses and how to protect your family.



### Ear Infections

*Ear infections commonly occur when fluid behind the eardrum, or in the middle ear, becomes trapped due to inflammation and becomes infected. Colds, sinus infections, throat infections, or even allergy attacks can cause the inflammation. Symptoms include ear pain and fever.*

**Treatment** Ear infections are commonly treated with a seven to 10 day prescription of oral antibiotics. Some patients do not require antibiotics, as the ear infection can heal without them. Acetaminophen and ibuprofen can help reduce fever and alleviate ear pain. Chiropractic care can also be used to treat certain illnesses, such as ear infections.

**Prevention** Nose health is important in the prevention of ear infections. Keep your nose as healthy as possible by using nasal saline daily when well, or several times a day when experiencing allergies, a cold, sinus, throat, or ear infection.



### Strep (Streptococcus)

*Streptococcus bacteria, commonly called strep or strep throat, has been a prevalent illness among children and families. These contagious bacteria can cause chills, headache, stomachache, vomiting, fever, and sore throat - many of which are flu-like symptoms. Anyone can get strep, but some are more susceptible to it. Families with multiple children may have one child that gets strep more often than any other children in the family.*

**Treatment** Strep throat has to be treated, not only because it is contagious, but also because if left untreated, it could be dangerous, causing rheumatic heart disease or an autoimmune disease. Pediatricians often prescribe regular antibiotics or even a strong antibiotic given as a shot in the office. Over-the-counter pain medications such as acetaminophen and ibuprofen can help with fevers. Gargling with salt water and drinking warm drinks can help soothe the throat and relieve some of the pain.

**Prevention** Try to not let little ones share drinks or food, as that's a very quick way for another child to get strep throat. Keep the sick child or person isolated as not to spread the bacteria. Hand washing and keeping the house and living areas clean also helps with not spreading the strep bacteria.



## Hand, Foot, and Mouth Disease

*Hand, foot, and mouth disease is very common in childhood. This is a contagious, viral disease, originating from the coxsackievirus. Symptoms include a pimple-like rash around the mouth, soles of the feet and on the palms of the hands. Sores can occur in the back of the throat causing pain, and most children will refuse to eat even their favorite foods. There will also be a low-grade fever, around 101 to 102 degrees.*

**Treatment** Hand, foot, and mouth disease is most contagious during the first week, but can stay in the body for up to a month or longer. The virus is a self-limiting virus, meaning the body fights it on its own. Once the rash begins to scab over, usually after two to three days, it is safe for children to return to school or daycare. Acetaminophen and ibuprofen can be administered for the fever and mouth pain; popsicles, pudding, and ice cream can also help soothe the throat.

**Prevention** Hand, foot, and mouth is more prevalent in the summer months. Prevention includes hand washing with soap and warm water, wiping toys and play surfaces with disinfectant wipes or sprays, as well as trying to isolate the child from other children during the first few days of the illness.



## Impetigo

*Impetigo is a skin rash, seen commonly in preschool and school-aged children. The rash is caused when streptococcus (strep) or staphylococcus (staph) bacteria get into a cut or abrasion or an area that is already irritated, like under the nose after blowing it a lot. The rash causes sores that resemble blisters that ooze fluid and look crusty. There is no fever with impetigo, and the rash is contagious. Scratching can cause it to spread from one area to another.*

**Treatment** Impetigo is typically treated with a prescription-strength local antibiotic ointment. If there are a lot of lesions, an oral antibiotic can be prescribed. There is no fever or pain typically associated with impetigo. Cool compresses can help relieve itching.

**Prevention** Impetigo is seen most commonly in early fall months. Keeping sports equipment clean (close-contact sports), hand washing, and keeping the lesions loosely covered are all ways to help prevent the spread of impetigo.



## Pink Eye (Conjunctivitis)

*Conjunctivitis, commonly called pink eye, occurs when the eye conjunctiva, clear tissue lying over the white of the eye, becomes inflamed. There are two types of pink eye, infectious (either bacterial or viral) or non-infectious (due to allergies). The infectious type of pink eye is a common illness in younger children. Symptoms include redness and discharge in one or both of the eyes, and sometimes swelling of the eyes and eyelids.*

**Treatment** A physician can determine what type of pink eye it is, and according to the type, can prescribe antibiotic eye drops or ointment. Viral conjunctivitis is self-limiting, and the body will heal itself of that type. Warm or cool compresses can be used to relieve swelling or any eye pain.

**Prevention** Pink eye is contagious, so precaution should be used to not spread the illness. Hand washing and reducing hand-to-hand contact with others while infected are both important in reducing the spread of the bacteria or virus. Pink eye can last a week or longer, and can still be contagious even after beginning drops or ointment. **KM**

Contributing experts: Dr. Ronald J. Vilela, M.D., Texas Children's Hospital West Campus; Dr. Lauren Shepard, D.O., Memorial Hermann Medical Group Pediatrics in Katy; Dr. Linda Wong, Texas Children's Pediatrics; Dr. Sridevi Muppidi, M.D., Memorial Hermann CCC; and Dr. Yvette J. Degazon, M.D., Houston Methodist Primary Care Group.