

HEALTHY KATY

Common ailments and issues to watch for as your child moves from one stage to another

Babies



RSV/Virus
Cold/Cough
Diaper Rash
Cradle Cap
Collic
Teething

1. Babies

In addition to common discomforts such as teething and diaper rash, babies are often more vulnerable to viruses and illnesses. Dr. Joseph Allen, medical director of the Emergency Center at Texas Children's Hospital West Campus says, "Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) bronchiolitis is the leading cause of hospital admissions in infants, with 100,000 infants needing hospitalization every year."

While RSV tends to present only symptoms of a cold in an older child or adult, infants can become more ill with fever, coughing, wheezing, and difficulty in breathing. "RSV is a very robust virus that can survive for several hours on surfaces when the respiratory viral particles come into contact with them," Dr. Allen says. Other common illnesses in babies include colds, coughs, fevers, and stomach viruses. Babies are also prone to skin problems, like diaper rash or cradle cap.

Toddlers



Ear Infections
Cough/Cold
Stomach Virus
Home Accidents

2. Toddlers

According to Dr. Allen, ear infections are very common in this age group. "Infections develop when mucus and fluid builds up in the middle ear canal, and this fluid becomes secondarily infected with bacteria. Hence the majority of ear infections follow an illness where the child has persistent nasal congestion." Ear infections that do not improve after a couple of days are most often prescribed antibiotics or eardrops. At-home treatments may include pain relievers, applying a warm washcloth to the ear, and making sure to get enough rest. Like infants, toddlers are also prone to colds, coughs, fevers, and vomiting. Because they are on the move now, they may also fall down stairs, pull down heavy items, or eat toxic things, so childproofing to their new level of independence is important. According to experts, household injuries are one of the top reasons kids under age 3 visit the ER.

Preschool & School-Age



Fifth Disease
Hand, Foot, &
Mouth Disease
Impetigo
Lice
Pink eye
Strep

3. Preschool and Elementary

Starting preschool or elementary school can bring on a whole host of new contagious issues into play. Dr. Allen reminds parents, "The overwhelming majority of viral illnesses will resolve on their own and that practically all children will outgrow being ill all the time as they develop immunity to the hundreds of viral strains they are exposed to in their childhood." While some extra TLC might be what is needed when children aren't feeling well, Dr. Allen also suggests some additional steps to maintain health. "Children should be encouraged to cover their mouth when sneezing and taught appropriate hand-washing to help reduce the spread of viruses and bacteria." He recommends Acetaminophen (Tylenol) and/or Ibuprofen (Motrin/Advil) to help reduce the discomfort of fever or cough. Preschool and school-age children may also contract lice, scabies, or impetigo from being in close quarters with other children.

KIDS GUIDE

Written by Debbie McDaniel and Katy Magazine's Editors



4. Tweens and Teens

In addition to many of the same common illnesses that school-age children face, Dr. Allen says that teens need to be encouraged to maintain healthy eating habits, drink plenty of water, and get at least seven to eight hours of sleep each night. Teens also have an increased risk of being exposed to mononucleosis, a virus commonly known as “the kissing disease.” Symptoms include fever, fatigue, sore throat, swollen glands, joint aches, and belly tenderness. Experts recommend lots of rest and fluids since this virus can last for over a month. Involvement in extracurricular activities is “important for the psychosocial maturation of teens as they develop into young adults,” Dr. Allen advises. “But parents must be involved to make sure that teenagers are not overextended.” For some teens and tweens, curiosity about alcohol, drug use, and sexual experimentation might come into to play. Parents should monitor activities, set clear boundaries and expectations, and talk regularly with their teens about these issues.



The Good News

The good news is that most viral illnesses will be gone within a week, and your child will be building his or her immunities with each encounter. As he or she grows, there will likely be less and less of them to battle. Be sure to eat healthy, drink plenty of fluids, and get rest and exercise so that you can best care for your kids. You may also want to stock up on a few extra boxes of tissue...just in case. **KM**

EDITOR'S NOTE: Our experts encourage parents to always seek medical advice if they are uncomfortable or concerned with any of their child's symptoms.

When to Call the Doctor

- Anytime you sense something's “not right”
- A low-grade fever for more than three days
- Lethargy that is uncharacteristic of your child
- Severe headaches or pain that do not respond to over-the-counter pain relievers
- Sore throat that makes it difficult to drink fluids
- Vomiting or diarrhea for more than two days

TOP TIPS for Healthy Kids

- Keep their pediatric appointments current
- Make hand-washing a habit
- Keep kids home when sick or contagious
- Teach them to drink lots of water
- Eat healthy meals as a family
- Insist kids get plenty of sleep

Thank you to Dr. Joseph Allen who contributed to this story.