

WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD IS SICK

Whether it's a cold, flu or other infection, you may be wondering what to do if your child is sick.

When to keep your child home

If your child is sick with anything other than a mild cold, the best thing to do is to keep him or her home. Getting some rest, drinking plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration, and taking ibuprofen or acetaminophen for aches and fever can help your child feel better.

Besides giving your child a chance to recover, staying home will ensure he or she doesn't get other children or adults sick at school or in the community. Your child should stay home until he or she has been fever-free (temperature less than 37.5 C) for 24 hours and is feeling better overall. Try to avoid spreading the illness to other family members by washing your hands often, and having your child wash their hands often. Your child should also cover their coughs and sneezes with their arm or a tissue instead of their hand, and stay two metres away from others if possible.

When to seek medical attention

While being sick is never fun, it usually isn't an emergency. Resting at home is usually the best way to recover and avoid spreading it to others. However, if your child's symptoms are severe and don't improve after a few days, contact your child's healthcare provider. You can also call Telehealth Ontario (1-866-797-0000), where trained health professionals can answer your questions by phone.

If your child starts experiencing any of the symptoms listed below, take your child to a hospital emergency department or call an ambulance:

- Shortness of breath
- Difficulty breathing
- Lips turning blue
- Extreme weakness
- Rapid pulse
- Confusion
- Passing out

Tips for preventing the spread of infection at home

We all get sick occasionally with a cold, the flu, gastroenteritis or other infectious illnesses. Taking some simple measures at home can help protect other family members from becoming infected too.

- [Wash your hands often with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.](#)
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Sneeze or cough into your sleeve rather than into your hands. Remind family members to do the same.
- Provide extra cleaning in frequently touched areas, for example:
 - toilet seats and handles
 - counter and table
 - doorknobs and light switches
 - handrails
 - work surfaces
 - keyboards
 - remote controls
 - telephones

Note: Be careful when cleaning and sanitizing surfaces of electronic devices.

- Minimize the sick person's contact with the rest of the family by having him/her use a separate bedroom and bathroom if possible. If the bathroom must be shared, make sure everyone has their own towel and facecloth.
- Don't share anything that goes in the mouth like utensils, drinking glasses or toothbrushes. Toys being used by children who are sick should be kept separate from other children until the toys have been cleaned and disinfected.
- When possible, the sick person should try to keep a distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) away from others. Avoid having visitors in the house.
- Consider using disposable gloves if you have to come into contact with the sick person's body fluids (blood, vomit, stool, etc.). Be sure to wash your hands after removing gloves.
- Disinfecting products are available on the market in a ready-to-use formula. Ensure you follow the manufacture's instructions. Surfaces must be cleaned prior to disinfecting.

Remember to store all cleaning chemicals safely away from children and pets in labelled containers.

For more information

For more information, including hand hygiene and infection prevention resources, visit your health unit website or call your local health unit below:

Leeds, Grenville & Lanark District Health Unit

www.healthunit.org

613-345-5685 or 1-800-660-5853

Eastern Ontario Health Unit

www.EOHU.ca

613-933-1375 or 1-800-267-7120