

Healthcare choices for children

Pink eye



Red eyes, watery discharge, the risk of spreading the infection...pink eye is one of the most common (and most troublesome) childhood maladies. Learn what to do and where to go if you suspect pink eye.

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| About | Also called red eye or conjunctivitis. | Known as pink eye because it can cause the whites of the eyes to look pink or red. | Occurs when the lining of the eye is infected, becoming pink or red and swollen. |
| | Extremely common. | Typically goes away in seven to 10 days without medical treatment. | Often highly contagious. |
| Causes | Viruses. | Allergens. | Irritants. |
| | Bacteria. | Reaction to eye drops. | Substances like shampoo, dirt, etc. |
| Symptoms | Redness or swelling of the white of the eyes. | Itchy or scratchy eyes. | Crusting of eyelids or lashes. |
| | Watery eyes. | Discharge from the eye(s). | Blurred vision. |
| At home care | Use cold or warm compress and artificial tears. | Wipe eyes from the inside toward the outside. | Stop contact lens use. |
| When to seek medical care | Pain in the eye. | Severe redness. | A weakened immune system. |
| | Sensitivity to light or blurred vision. | Symptoms that get worse or don't improve. | Preexisting conditions. |
| Reducing risk | Wash hands often with soap and water. | Avoid sharing personal items. | Stop wearing contact lenses until your doctor approves. |
| | Avoid touching or rubbing eyes. | Don't use the same eye products for your infected and uninfected eyes. | Use a clean towel and washcloth daily and change pillowcases often. |



More information

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| Flyer | Help Protect Yourself From Getting Pink Eye , Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. |
| Podcast | In this podcast , the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Adam Cohen, MD, a pediatrician and parent, discusses conjunctivitis (pink eye), a common eye condition in children. He reviews causes and treatment, suggestions on when to call or visit a doctor, and practical tips to prevent it from spreading. |

Ear infections

Ear tugging, irritability, crying, and being unable to say where the pain is coming from are classic signs of an ear infection. Learn what to do and where to go if you suspect one.

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| About | Typically begins with either a viral infection (e.g., common cold) or unhealthy bacteria growth. | In some cases, the middle ear becomes inflamed and causes fluid buildup behind the eardrum. In other cases, the Eustachian tubes become inflamed. | Children are more prone to ear infections because their ear passages are narrow, short, and horizontal. That means it's easier for germs to reach the middle ear and for fluid to get trapped. |
| Causes | Bacteria. | Viruses. | Swelling from a cold or allergy blocking Eustachian tubes. |
| Symptoms | Constantly tugging or pulling at the ear. | More crying than usual, specially when laying down; fussiness or irritability. | Trouble sleeping or hearing. |
| | Fever or headache. | Fluid coming out of the ears. | Ear pain. |
| At home care | Body's immune system can usually resolve infections on their own. | Typically, pediatricians recommend observing the child for 48 to 72 hours. | Over-the-counter treatments (e.g., pain relievers) can be provided by pediatricians. |
| | Diagnosis and treatment involves three steps. First, the pediatrician determines if an ear infection is present. | Second, the pediatrician and parent discuss risk factors and how to reduce them. | Finally, observation and treatment of symptoms ensure the child can recover without pain. |
| When to seek medical care | A persistent fever and stiff neck. | Pus, discharge, or fluid coming from the ear. | Worsening symptoms. |
| | Hearing loss. | Severe pain or dizziness | Redness, swelling, or pain behind or around the ear. |
| Reducing risk | Avoid secondhand smoke, which is a major contributor to childhood illness. | Teach children to wash their hands frequently to prevent the spread of germs. | Keep up with vaccinations as studies show vaccinated children experience fewer ear infections. |
| | Get a flu shot for your child. They help prevent ear infections. | Make sure kids don't fall asleep while using a bottle. | Try to limit the use of group child care. |



More information

Flyer

[Preventing and Treating Ear Infections](#), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Upper respiratory infections (URI or common cold)

The common cold can derail everyday lives. When a cold strikes, it can be difficult to know what to do. Is an urgent care visit necessary or will a home remedy work? Read on to learn about home care and prevention ideas to help children stay healthy.

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| About | The most common illness in children. Every year, the common cold leads to more healthcare provider visits and missed school days than any other illness. | Most children will have six to eight colds per year, mostly in fall and winter. | Your child can catch a cold through airborne droplets from a sick person or through direct contact. |
| Causes | A virus infects and inflames the lining of the nose and throat. | Can be caused by more than 200 viruses. | Rhinoviruses cause the most colds. |
| Symptoms start one to three days after child is in contact with cold virus and usually last one week | Stuffy, runny nose. | Watery eyes. | Scratchy throat. |
| | Sneezing. | Mild cough. | Sore throat. |
| | Achy muscles and bones. | Headache. | Low-grade fever. |
| | Chills. | Discharge from the nose. | Mild tiredness. |
| At home care | There's no cure, but most children recover on their own. | Antibiotics don't work against viruses and aren't prescribed. | Give children plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. |
| | Make sure children get plenty of rest. | To ease nasal congestion, try saline sprays. | Keep children away from secondhand smoke, which can worsen the irritation in the nose and throat. |
| | Discuss over-the-counter products with your pediatrician. | Keep children home until they are fever-free for 24 hours. | Use a cool-mist humidifier at night to make breathing easier. |
| When to seek medical care | A persistent fever that won't break. | Symptoms that last for more than 10 days. | Symptoms that don't get better with over-the-counter medications. |
| Reducing risk | Keep children away from those who are sick. | Teach children to wash their hands often. | Remind children to not touch their eyes, nose and mouth. |
| | Clean toys and play areas. | Carry an alcohol-based hand gel with at least 60% alcohol for times when soap and water aren't available. | Keep household surfaces clean. |



More information

Symptom checker

[KidsDoc Symptom Checker](#), Healthy Children

Video

[Treating Your Child's Cold or Flu](#), Healthy Children from American Academy of Pediatrics

Antibiotics

Children don't need antibiotics every time they're sick. These tips can help ensure the appropriate use of antibiotics, including how to prevent antibiotic resistance.

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| Antibiotics prevent and treat infections caused by bacteria. | They are powerful drugs that can fight life-threatening bacterial infections. | Widespread unnecessary use of antibiotics can cause antibiotic resistance, a major public health challenge. | Antibiotic resistance occurs when germs no longer respond to the antibiotics that are designed to kill them. |
| Only use antibiotics if needed. | Take exactly as prescribed. | Antibiotics only treat certain bacterial infections like strep throat, whooping cough, and urinary tract infections. | Antibiotics don't work on viruses. |
| Antibiotics aren't needed for some common bacterial infections, including some sinus and ear infections. | Taking antibiotics when they're not needed won't help and could cause harmful side effects. Ask your pediatrician for guidance. | Don't share antibiotics with anyone. | Don't save antibiotics for a later time. |
| Talk to your pediatrician and pharmacist if you have questions or if your child develops side effects or allergic reactions. | Ask your pediatrician about ways children can feel better when antibiotics aren't needed. | Keep antibiotics in a safe place. | Properly dispose leftover antibiotics or return them to your pharmacist or pediatrician. |



More information

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| Flyer | Antibiotics for a Sore Throat, Cough or Runny Nose , Choosing Wisely® Antibiotics Aren't Always the Answer , Centers for Disease Control and Prevention |
| Video | Antibiotics Aren't Always The Answer , Centers for Disease Control and Prevention |
| Quiz | Antibiotic Quiz , Centers for Disease Control and Prevention |

CapitalBlueCross.com



Sources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/parents/children/index.html>

Medline: <https://medlineplus.gov/childrenspage.html>

National Institutes of Health: <https://www.nichd.nih.gov/>

American Academy of Pediatrics: <https://www.aap.org/en-us/Pages/Default.aspx>

Choosing Wisely®: <https://www.choosingwisely.org/societies/american-academy-of-pediatrics/>

Healthy Children, American Academy of Pediatrics: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/Pages/default.aspx>

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