

Parenting Toolkit: Symptom awareness

Knowing where to get care



When your child is sick or injured, it's not always easy to know where to take them for care. This guide can help you make the right call, depending on your child's symptoms and your situation.

Pediatrician Unless it's a life-threatening emergency, always call your pediatrician first for guidance.	Urgent care These centers are good options for problems that raise a concern but aren't potentially life-threatening or disabling, and your pediatrician isn't available.	Emergency department Go to an emergency room for life-threatening situations or if your child could become permanently disabled.
Child appears to be unwell with or without symptoms such as a rash or runny nose.	If you suspect your child has an ear infection.	Head, neck, or spine injury.
Vomiting.	A severe cold or flu.	A high fever that won't go down.
Has signs of a common cold.	Dehydration or diarrhea.	A temperature that drops too low.
Has blood or pus around the navel.	Constant cough.	Extreme tiredness, including difficulty waking up.
Not responding normally to sounds or visual cues.	Sore throat.	Bloody urine, stool, or vomit.
Needs routine tests or vaccinations.	Pink eye.	Deep cuts, uncontrolled bleeding, or potentially serious broken bones.
Requires standard health exams.	Minor headaches.	Unexplainable swelling.
Has ear drainage.	Low-grade fevers.	Breathing problems or seizures.
Routine physical examinations.	Limited rashes.	Poisoning.
If your child is experiencing behavioral issues.	Minor injuries such as sprains, bruises, minor cuts and burns, minor broken bones or minor eye injuries.	Severe burn.
Monitoring development progress and milestones.	Mild allergic reaction.	Severe allergic reaction.
General concerns about your child.	Bladder infection.	Unusual or bad headache or chest pain.

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Sources:

March of Dimes: <https://www.marchofdimes.org/>

Medline: <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000594.htm> — Where to Go for Care

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

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