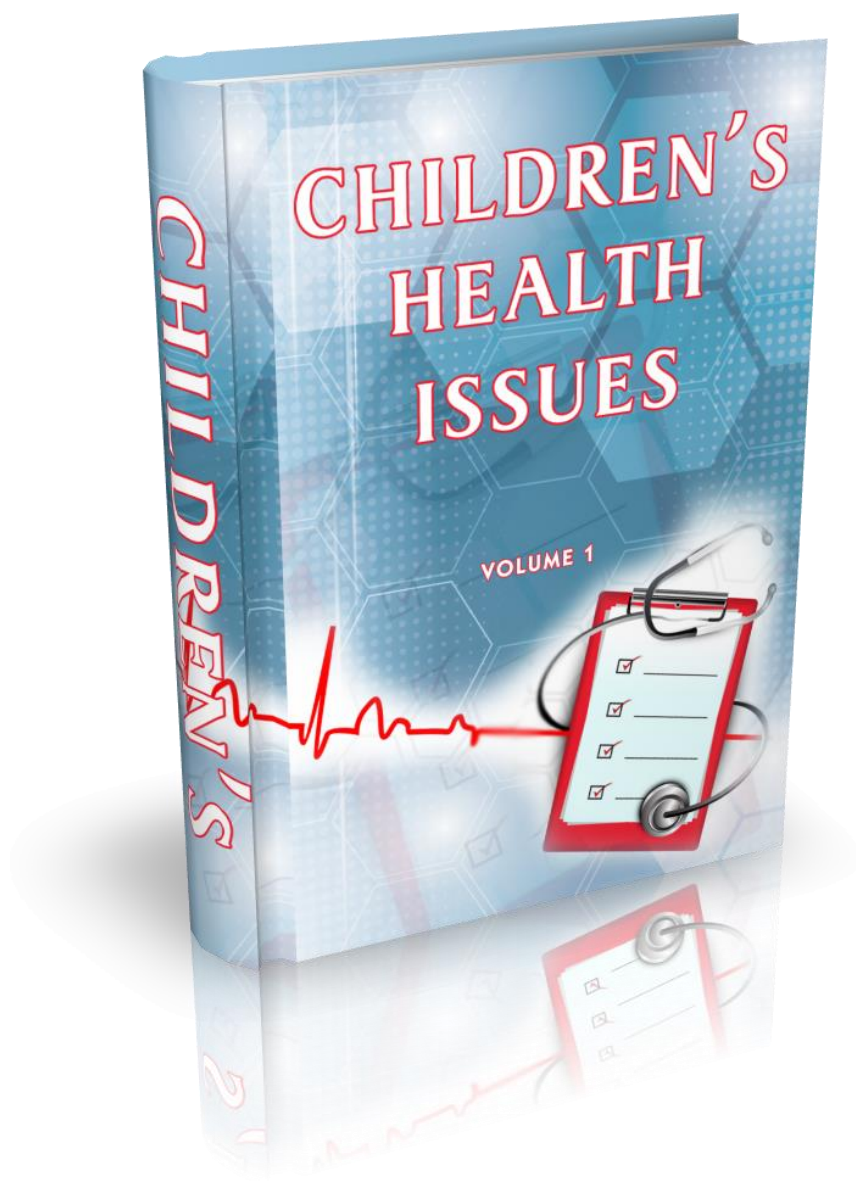


# CHILDRENS HEALTH ISSUES

## VOLUME 1

Special Report



Steven Spellborgh

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<a href="#"><u>Abdominal Pain in Children .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>5</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Children’s Health Issues: Abrasions, Cuts and Scratches .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>6</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Appendicitis in Kids .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>8</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Chicken Pox In Children .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>9</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Common Cold in Children .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>11</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Conjunctivitis Or Pinkeye In Children .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>12</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Constipation in Children .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>14</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Corn, Calluses And Blisters In Children .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>16</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Ear Infections in Children .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>17</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Eczema In Children .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>18</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Fever In Children .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>20</u></a>
<a href="#"><u>Flu And Cold In Children .....</u></a>	<a href="#"><u>21</u></a>

## Abdominal Pain in Children



Tummy aches are one of the most frequently complained about problems in children. There are many causes attributed with it, and it is a challenge for the parent or the physician to find out the exact problem. Sometimes the pain requires immediate attention and can also be a case of emergency. The causes can be related to food, infections, poisoning, insect bites, etc.

Bacteria and viruses are responsible in case of abdominal pain due to infections. Gastroenteritis and stomach flu are some of the examples of infections that can cause stomach aches. Gastroenteritis is the inflammation and irritation of stomach and the gastrointestinal passage. Extra care must be taken by travelers, as the food and drinks can be contaminated at new locations and can lead to traveler's getting

diarrhea. Stomach pain due to viral infections ward off quickly, but bacterial infections demand the intake of antibiotics. In both the cases, some children recover very fast by vomiting and excreting. In case of diarrhea, excess drinking fluids should be given to the kid to avoid dehydration.

Food related stomach aches can be caused because of food poisoning, gas production, excess food ingestion and food allergies. Problems because of food poisoning are temporary and can cause bloating. Symptoms of food poisoning are vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, and nausea. Usually these symptoms surface within two days of consumption of contaminated food. Depending on the severity chill, fever, bloody stools, or damage to the nervous system can follow. In case of a group of people who consumed the contaminated food, this situation is known as an outbreak. Over two hundred diseases are known to be transmitted via food. Food can be poisoned because of toxic agents or infective agents. Infective agents are parasites, bacteria, and viruses. Toxic agents are uncooked food, exotic foods, and poisonous mushrooms. Food can get contaminated because of handling by unclean workers at the local restaurant, too. Parents should check out the cleanliness and should visit a trusted restaurant.

Particular foods can cause the irritation, such as dairy products can cause lactose intolerance. If this is the case, the child is allergic to certain food or drinks and swallowing even a small amount can cause vomiting, nausea, diarrhea, cramping, and skin rash. Since these items are harmless otherwise, such kind of allergic reactions are known as hypersensitivity reaction. Sometimes the symptoms can be life threatening and are known as anaphylactic shock or anaphylaxis.

Poisoning can also be due to overdose of medicines and even due to eating non-food stuffs. Insect bites such as black widow spider bite can also lead to pain in the abdomen. It can be accompanied with muscle cramps, weakness, nausea, tremor, vomiting and in severe case it can cause dizziness, faintness, respiratory problems, and chest pain. Also, the heart rate and blood pressure increases.

In very rare cases, abdominal pain can be due to appendicitis. This is a result of blockage and inflammation of tissues. Young kids have a higher rate if complications are considered and should be immediately rushed to the hospital. The pain starts slowly in the abdomen, specifically near the belly button. The pain shifts slowly to the right side of the lower abdomen within a time period of over twenty four hours. Clear symptoms are abdominal pain, vomiting, nausea, fever and loss of appetite. Diabetes can also be a reason of abdominal pain. Small children usually curl up, cry and express pain through facial expression. Some kids will be reluctant to talk, but the parent should try to get clear explanation of the problem. Along with close monitoring of the symptoms, studying the location of pain, pain duration, nature of vomiting, and urinary problems will help. After that a pediatric should be consulted who can further refer to a gastroenterologist. Until help is reached, the child should be made to relax.

Often, lying with face in downward direction can relieve pain due to gas. In case of vomiting and diarrhea, fluids should be given constantly. Solid food should only be given when the child is comfortable about eating it.

## Children's Health Issues: Abrasions, Cuts and Scratches

Sometimes abrasions, cuts and scratches result in dire consequences if they aren't taken care of at the right time. Children run around the house and drop vases and other glass material, which can result in scratches or cuts. Outdoor activities should be supervised carefully, otherwise abrasions caused by a wall or a rock is unavoidable. There are slight differences among the three and most of the time children get them while playing.





Cuts are caused by sharp objects, which can penetrate into the skin or damage the skin on the surface. Scratches are mild form of cuts. They are also caused by sharp objects such as a piece of glass, thorn or a knife. Even fingernails can cause a scar. Abrasion is caused by friction or rubbing of the skin with a rough surface. Rug burns and board burns are also

examples of abrasion, because they are caused by friction.

Also, in all three cases, the wound can bleed. It bleeds when the tiny blood vessels located underneath the skin gets ruptured. Platelets form clot to stop the bleeding and a scab can also form, which should be pulled out as that will interfere with the healing process of the body. If the bleeding isn't stopping, the wound should be covered with a soft cloth. After that the wound should be cleaned using lukewarm water and mild soap. Antibacterial ointment should be used to clean the wound and it should be covered with a bandage. The antibacterial ointment helps kill germs. The bandage will prevent bacteria from getting within and prevent the wound from getting bothersome. But the bandage should be changed everyday and the wound should be kept dry.

The good thing is that abrasion, cuts and scratches don't require any special attention in most cases. But if the scratch is made by animal claws or abrasion is caused by a rusty metallic surface, a doctor should be approached immediately, because the animal could have rabies and the rust can cause septic. Depending on the situation, the doctor would prescribe antibiotics, lotion or even shots. It is also a good idea that parents make sure that their kid is given tetanus shot on a regular basis. Sometimes, the wound won't be caused in dangerous circumstances, but because of negligence, the wound will get infected by bacteria. If the wound is infected, it will show symptoms such as redness, swollen skin, and production of puss which can be of the color yellow or either green.

Cuts can sometimes be too deep and even long. In such cases, stitches should be certainly opted for. It is a very simple procedure. The area of the wound is made numb using some kind of anesthesia. It can either be injected or simply applied directly. Then the doctor will sew the cut edges together using certain needle and thread. If the cut isn't big enough, the cut is sealed using a special kind of glue, instead of the stitches. The glue will hold the edges together so that the skin underneath will heal and over a period



of time, the glue will dissolve. Kids need to check with the doctor every week, so that the doctor will be able to analyze the improvement. And when the wound is completely healed, the stitches are cut open using scissors and then the threads are pulled off gently. In majority of the cases, the wound doesn't leave behind a scar. This totally depends on the method and effectiveness of the treatment.

## Appendicitis in Kids



Many children have their appendix removed even before turning the age of fourteen. And the risk starts to peak as they age. Majority of children who get an abdominal surgery is because of appendicitis. Appendicitis is actually appendix inflammation and as a result, a fingerlike tube grows on the lower right part of large intestine. Appendix is located at the closed end of the larger intestine, known as the cecum, and measures up to many inches. Although, doctors say that the appendix isn't of much help to the body, but appendix's inner wall releases antibodies, which are produced by the lymphatic tissues.

Appendicitis can be detected by the onset of pain in the middle portion of the abdomen, the portion above the belly button. After a few hours the area will swell and there will be intense pain when touching the abdomen's right side. The patient will begin to vomit and will have nausea. There will low fever and there will be problems will gas and stool passage. Some people, after the onset of these symptoms, will take laxatives or enemas mistaking appendicitis for constipation. But this is extremely dangerous, as these medicines will in turn increase the risk of the appendix bursting. So it is recommended to consult the doctor before going for any kind of medication, even any pain relievers. Besides increasing the risk, they even mask the symptoms and makes diagnosis even more hard. If the child's symptoms are very much similar to that of the appendicitis' symptoms, he should be immediately taken to the doctor for further diagnosis. The doctor will first study the child's digestive illnesses' history. He should also be divulged information about the symptoms, timing, bowel movements and its frequency. The stool should also be checked for mucus or blood. Children, who can communicate, can be asked to point out the location of pain in the abdomen. Toddlers who haven't started talking or who

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hesitate to do talk will raise their knees close to the chest, hips will be flexed and the abdomen becomes tender.

Although, the actual cause of this abnormal growth of the appendix is not known, but it can result because of some kind of obstruction or infection in the intestines. The obstruction can be created due to thick mucus build-up inside the appendix. Some part of the stool can also enter inside. There will be mucus formation and the stool will harden within resulting in the swelling up of the appendix. If it is an infection, it should be treated immediately, as it can burst and there is a danger of the infection spreading to other parts of the body via bloodstream. That is the reason why even blood test is done, so as to determine whether the infection has spread or not. The urine test is done to check for problems in the urinary tract. The problem is then confirmed with the help of computed tomography or an ultrasound. Sometimes children with pneumonia have the similar symptoms, so to make matters clear even X-ray of the chest is done. Medical attention must be sought within forty eight hours of the start of the abdominal pain. Sometimes, abdomen develops mild inflammation, many weeks before the diagnosis is done.

After the diagnosis is done and appendicitis is determined, appendectomy is performed on the patient. The doctor will immediately order the intake of antibiotics before the surgery is performed. In case of confined appendicitis, it can be treated solely by antibiotics and no surgery is required. This is because the inflammation is very mild and the body itself fights with the infection. But, still as a precautionary measure, such kinds of patients must be kept in observation until their condition becomes stabilized. If the appendix ruptured then appendice perforation is done. In this procedure, a drain is inserted inside the skin, through the abscess with the help of CT scan or ultrasound which gives the exact location. Some people develop complications later such as wound infection and accumulation of puss inside the appendix.

## Chicken Pox in Children

A typical childhood disease in children chicken pox is very notorious for being contagious. A kid infected with chickenpox virus will develop numerous itchy blisters which are filled with fluid. These blisters burst later, which lead to crusts formation. Children get approximately five hundred such blisters which grow over a red skin spot. They show up on the face first and then spread to the trunk, scalp and the rest of the body. After a day of appearance, the fluid filled blisters become cloudy and later on, scabby.



The itchiness caused due to chicken pox is really intense and irritating. And the crust, if not treated, can leave marks for life. Within forty eight hours of getting infected, the symptoms begin to surface. It is only after ten to twenty days after contamination, that the pox appears. Symptoms include fever, abdominal pain, headache, loss of appetite and finally the pox rash. The condition can be confirmed by testing the pox blisters and by even taking blood test. The medical history of the child can be helpful in determining the severity of the condition.

The virus blameworthy for infecting a person with chicken pox is varicella-zoster or simply, varicella. The virus spreads through airborne transmission, droplet transmission and direct contact. Not only the infected carry these viruses and should be avoided, also people or kids who have taken the vaccination recently should also be avoided. Since the invention of chicken pox vaccine, there has been a decline in the chicken pox cases. Children who are under the age of ten should be highly prepared as they are more prone to getting infected by this virus. But on the contrary, when older children or adults catch chicken pox, they become sicker when compared to young kids.

A child or a person who has been infected by chicken pox virus becomes host to the virus for lifetime. But the number is kept under control by the body's immune system. Infants, sometimes, get partial immunity from the blood of their mother, if the mother was already infected by chicken pox. Kids of mothers, who haven't been infected by chicken pox, tend to get severe chickenpox. Children who have been administered with chicken pox vaccination get mild chicken pox. Skin condition of children with skin problems like eczema or sunburn can worsen. Such kids can be getting above one thousand and five hundred poxes. Children who have taken steroids can also face bad situation.

Along with the application of the prescribed lotion and intake of oral medication containing antihistamine, the itchiness can be eased by bathing the child in lukewarm water and oatmeal. The antiviral medications should be started within the first day itself. Other people living in the same household as of the patient should also take antiviral medicines recommended by a doctor. It is a must for everyone to take chicken pox vaccination as a part of immunization routine schedule. There is a hundred percent chance of not developing moderate to severe chickenpox and nearly ninety percent chance of not developing mild chicken pox. Chicken pox vaccine is the only vaccine which doesn't demand a booster. But a higher dose can be given to adolescents so as to

avoid shingles or herpes zoster. But a doctor should be consulted before opting for the higher dose.

## Common Cold in Children



Common Cold is caused because of upper respiratory system infection due to cold virus. This infection affects parts such as ears, nose and throat. There are about two hundred known viruses which are responsible for common cold, out of which rhinovirus is the most common. Because of this great number of viruses, there isn't any shot or vaccination available which helps in preventing cold.

The best solution to the cold is human body immune system. Majority of a child's visit to the doctor will be because of cold. According to an estimate, a child catches cold nearly eight times in a year and each time it last up to a week or so.

Cold viruses usually spread by sneeze or cough from the infected person. The wet and slimy substance inside the nose, called mucus, is the carrier of the virus. When a person cough or sneeze, the mucus drops come out of the mouth and when other persons breaths in these droplets they catch cold. Cold can also spread by handling of contaminated stuffs like towel, door knobs, school desk, etc. If a person touches a contaminated towel and then touches his nose or eyes, there is a great chance of getting an infection. Therefore, it is a good habit to wash the hands regularly and keep them germ-free.

The cold viruses have docking points which helps it to stick to the interior of the nose. It then controls the nose's cell lining and begins to multiply into more viruses. White cells are responsible to fight these viruses inside the nose. They even kill them and finally get victory after seven days. Sneeze and runny nose actually prevent the viruses to affect the rest of the body parts. A person sneezes when the nerves inside the nose detect irritation and take the help of the lungs to push them out by letting out a blast of air through the mouth and the nose. The air, while sneezing, comes out at the speed of hundred miles per hour faster than cars on the road.

Once the child contracts cold viruses, they take two to three days to develop and show symptoms. There are many symptoms of cold. The child becomes cranky. He will complain of headache, blocked nose, cough, sneeze, sore throat, muscle ache, nasal



cavity congestion and will become exhausted. Low fever can also accompany, along with body chills. Medicines do not speed up the process of healing as the viruses complete their cycle irrespective of the intake. But they do suppress further growth and make the child feel better.

Children shouldn't take any medicines on their own, thinking that it's just a cold. Parents should supervise the dosage and medicine being taken. And in turn, the parents should follow a doctor's prescription. Decongestants help to decrease the size of the swollen nose lining, which makes breathing easier. Antihistamines help to dry the mucus and stop sneezes and runny noses. Ibuprofen and acetaminophen can be given if the child is experiencing headache and muscle ache.

At home, parents should give hot food and drink to the child as they help to soothe sore throats and coughs. The heat also clears up the mucus. Chicken soup is an age old remedy for common cold. Steamy showers are another good option as they help with stuffy nose. Itchy eyes, scratchy throat and stuffy throats can also be treated with humidifiers which spray cool and fine mist. They also loosen the mucus. The nose should be blown regularly to let the mucus out of the body. It is a good idea to use disposable tissues instead of regular handkerchiefs. Complete bed rest for a day or two is greatly suggested.

The best precaution that can be taken is eating healthy food and balanced diet so as to strengthen the immune system. The child must exercise regularly in order to stay fit and sleep adequately. Children who are stressed out more frequently are more prone to have cold. Therefore, it is good if the kid takes extra rest and goes to bed early on some days. And when the child is suffering from cold, he should relax and take bed rest as much as possible.

## Conjunctivitis or Pinkeye In Children



Conjunctivitis or pinkeye is a common problem in school going kids. The eyes become red, itchy, and swollen. There can also be a discharge of gooey liquid from the eye which can be of the color white, clear, green or yellow. Conjunctivitis

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is also known as pinkeye because the eye's white part turns pink or red. When the child experiences itchiness and redness in the eyes, he/she should inform the elders as soon as possible, as pinkeye is very contagious and spreads very easily.

It is possible that only one eye can get affected by conjunctivitis, while the other eye does not. In usual cases, both the eyes get infected. Conjunctivitis doesn't hurt usually, but the eyes sure do itch badly. There can be a sensation similar to an eyelash or tiny particle getting in the eye, which can be very annoying. The infection lasts for about a week and usually goes away by itself. But if the itching is very troublesome, it should be treated with medicine. Some children can have conjunctivitis accompanied with ear infections, as the bacteria responsible for causing pinkeye is also responsible for causing ear infection.

Conjunctivitis is caused by virus or bacteria. Viruses which cause conjunctivitis are also responsible for cold. Bacteria which cause conjunctivitis also cause ear infection. Conjunctivitis spreads by touching. If a person touches the hand of the infected person, who has recently touched his eyes, also gets the infection. And since infected children deal with their parents and children, they also pose the risk of getting the infection. The prevention in this case is to wash hands often with warm water and disinfecting soap. Conjunctivitis when caused by bacteria & virus, and is contagious is known as infectious conjunctivitis. Conjunctivitis can also be caused due to allergies or because of entry of irritating foreign body into the eyes. Conjunctivitis caused by this medium is not contagious.



A doctor should be approached upon if the itchiness is very irritating. The doctor will check the eyes for redness and liquid discharge. The doctor would ask about the encounter with any friend or known person who seemed to have pinkeye or whether the conjunctivitis was caused because of some allergy or entry of foreign object into the eye. The doctor can

also check the ears for the possibility of ear infection. If the pinkeye is caused because of bacterial infection, the doctor will recommend antibiotic eye ointment or drops. Usually infants are given eye ointment, whereas children and adults are given eye drops. The parents should put the drops or ointment into the child's eyes four to five times a day for nearly seven days or so. The dosage and timings should be maintained to get rid of the infection completely.

If the conjunctivitis is caused due to virus, there is nothing much the antibiotics can do. And if the pinkeye is caused by allergies or any foreign object, the doctor can recommend special eye drops to deal with the allergy symptoms. Warm water can also be splashed on the eyes to ease the itching. A cool or warm washcloth can be used to clean the discharge. Parents can clean the eyes carefully with cotton balls and warm water and remove the crusty stuff which is formed at the ends of the eyes. The towels and washcloths used for cleaning should head straight to the laundry so that the infection doesn't spread to other family members.

## Constipation in Children



Constipation is a condition of improper bowel movement. Usually the child experiences pain and has a hard time passing dry and hard stool. In normal condition there is no pain while passing the stool and it has a soft texture. The bowel movement is also regular. A child having constipation not only finds it difficult to pass stool, but at times will feel the urge to pass and when he goes to the toilet, he cannot relieve himself.

The digestive system is responsible from the intake of the food to the smooth passage of waste. The food or fluids are consumed from the mouth, which heads towards the stomach via the food pipe. After the stomach treats the food with

acid, it passes on to the small intestines and then to the large intestines, also known as bowels. The final stage of food digestion is the outlet through of the waste through the anus and rectum. During the whole processing, the body parts absorb nutrients and water from the food supplied to them. The left over matter comes out as waste.

It is a myth among some people who say that an individual is constipated if he or she doesn't pass stool on a daily basis. But the truth is that the bathroom habit differs from one individual to other. So if constipation is to be checked the regular pattern of bathroom habit of that particular individual must be checked and the comparisons must not be made with the other.

Other than not passing stool regularly, the child feels full most of the times and is a little uncomfortable. The belly can also feel stretched because of the full feeling. The child makes great effort to pass and the experience is very painful. Even after passing, the child may feel the urge of passing more stools. Because of the hard stool, it cause small tears in the anus skin and there will be little blood on the toilet paper. The child should immediately tell this to his parents, who can take care of the situation immediately. Some kids who have a worse condition will pass watery stool, something similar to diarrhea, and mucus along with the hard stool.



Constipation is becoming more and more widespread because of the unhealthy diet pattern followed by most of us today. With the trend of fast food, other fatty, starchy and sugary foods, children aren't getting the required amount of fiber, which in turn slows down the bowels. It is the responsibility of the parents to make their children eat fiber enriched foods such as vegetables, fruits, and whole grains. Along with eating food rich with fiber, it is also a must to drink enough fluids. Water is the best fluid for this condition. Fluids help to soften the stool and allow smooth passage within the intestine. Insufficient intake of fluids makes the stool dry and hard. Children

are becoming more stagnant because of video games, internet and television, which are leaving them with little or no time for physical exercise. Exercise helps the food to move through the digestive system. Lesser active play time and physical activity is also a major cause of constipation. Medicines should be avoided and should be taken only when doctor recommends them.

Stress and anxiety can play havoc over the digestive system. School going kids are usually stressed out because of the homework, assignments, and exams. An adult can talk the kid out of the stress. Children, who have the irritable bowel syndrome or IBS, worsen their condition because of stress. Spicy and fatty foods can also act as triggers, along with the stress. Kids having this syndrome might even experience gas and belly pain. Sometimes children avoid going to the bathroom when they feel the need for. Usually unclean restrooms keep children away. But when the nature's call is neglected, it becomes harder to go at a later time. In very rare cases, medical conditions such as lupus, diabetes and thyroid gland malfunctioning can also lead to constipation.



## Corn, Calluses And Blisters In Children



Almost every kid and teenager faces corns, calluses and blisters problem. They cause extreme discomfort, but at the same time, they are easily preventable. The major cause for all of them is friction between the skin and foreign objects.

Dancers experience corns. They are painful bumps on the toes. Area affected with corn becomes hard and the skin

becomes thick. The skin surrounding it becomes yellow and it appears like a soft ring encircling it. Skin in the center is gray. They develop on the toes mostly and appear because of tight shoes, which apply lots of pressure on the toe region. The rubbing of the shoes elevates the problem. In this case, a more comfortable pair of shoes should be opted. Corns take longer time to go away. A doughnut shaped pad can be worn in the shoe to avoid friction. Pads with salicylic acid are also highly suggested. If the corn is hurting badly, a podiatrist should be consulted.

Many people complain of callus after shoveling or raking leaves. The symptoms are that the affected area develops hard skin and are similar to that of corn. Repeated application of pressure will thicken the hardened skin which has a yellow or grayish color. In some sense, it actually acts as a protection layer. Gymnasts and guitarist often are victims of callus. Gymnasts develop them when working with uneven parallel bars and guitarists develop them when playing with the strings continuously. But once they are formed, calluses make their task easier. Gymnasts can swing on bars more easily and guitarists can play the guitar well.

Callus when formed on the foot, especially on the sole, can be very painful every time it is stepped on. They form on the ball or the curvy part of the sole, which follows the toes. Sometimes they can also form the heel or on small toes. To avoid callus, it is advised to avoid tight fitting shoes and shoes with high heels. Both of them put a lot of pressure and stress on certain points. The callus can be soaked in lukewarm water and then it should be rubbed with a pumice stone. This will remove the dead skin.

Blisters are usually caused when new pair of shoes has been worn, in general terms, they are caused by pressure and rubbing. Also they are formed more easily when compared to calluses. The skin is popped up with some watery fluid inside it and can appear anywhere on the hand or the feet. The best way to avoid them is to wear protecting gear such as gloves when doing heavy duty work, like while shoveling or even when driving a cycle or a bike. If the blisters aren't taken care of in the initial

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stages, they grow further to form calluses. This can happen when the same pair of shoes is worn everyday, which caused the blister in the first place. Blisters heal by themselves over a period of time. They should be cleaned regularly and kept clean & covered with a bandage.

In case of corn, calluses and blisters, the best approach is prevention when compared to cure. Firstly, protective gear, like work gloves or grips, should be worn when doing strenuous jobs. Tight-fitting shoes should not be worn to avoid corn and calluses. Researchers say that the feet are of the maximum size in afternoon. So it is advisable to shop for shoes in the afternoon. Also a trial should be done before deciding on the final pair. A particular pair of shoes shouldn't be worn on a regular basis. Shoe pads can be worn to avoid the pressure.

## Ear Infections in Children



Middle ear infection is a very common problem faced by children. Even infants below two years could face this problem. Infection in the ear is caused by germs and viruses. They enter the human body and grow to cause infection, affecting the normal functioning of the body. Similarly, germs can enter the ears. Depending on the location of infection, the infections are named. The human ear can be divided

into the inner part, middle part and outer part. When the outer ear is infected by germs, the infection is known as swimmer's ear. When the inner part of the ear gets infected, it is called middle ear infection. The germs infect the middle portion of the ear and fill that area with pus or a yellow gooey liquid. This liquid has cells which fight germs. The middle part of the ear is shaped in the form of a tiny air pocket. It is located at the back of the eardrum. And when the pus begins to fill in this area, the ear feels like a filled balloon which is on the verge of popping. This feeling is really painful.

The throat is connected to the middle portion of the ear through a channel known as Eustachian tube and in fact middle portions of both the ears are connected to the throat by two Eustachian tubes. The job of these tubes is to allow the free movement of air, from the middle ear, in and out direction. Infants below three years have less developed and smaller Eustachian tubes and therefore are less capable of keeping germs

completely out of the middle ear. As the child grows, so do the Eustachian tubes and the more capable they are of keeping germs outside, but they still face some problem.

Usually kids, who have allergic problems and catch cold very frequently, are more prone to get ear infections. When the child gets cold, the Eustachian tube gets obstructed which allow germs to get into the middle ear. And the germs which gain entry, multiply rapidly resulting in a middle ear infection.

The child gets a fever along with the ear pain. Some even find it difficult to hear because of the blockage. Middle ear infection is not contagious, but the cold caught from others can eventually result in an ear infection. The sooner the doctor is contacted, the better for the child and the rest of the family members. The doctor will check the ear with the help of an otoscope. It is a special flashlight which makes the eardrum visible. The eardrum is a thin membrane separating the outer ear from the middle ear. The otoscope can also be used to blow a puff of air into the ear. This determines whether the ear drum is functioning normally and is moving in a healthy way or not. Because of the puss formation due to the infection, the fluid will press against the ear drum and may even make it to bulge. Also, the eardrum can turn red because of the infection.

The doctor will prescribe a pain reliever to be taken for the next two days. Antibiotics will be prescribed if the infection is caused because of bacteria, which will end the infection within a couple of days. In case, the doctor recommends an antibiotic, the cycle must be completed as told by the doctor, otherwise there can be a possibility of re-infection. Few children who get ear infections frequently will have to undergo other tests such as tympanogram and audiogram.

Children can take some steps to avoid ear infection. They must wash their hands regularly. They must keep away from people who are infected with cold. And if they do come near or in contact with an infected person, they should wash their hands and should not touch their eyes or nose. Parents, who smoke, should not do it near the kid as the tobacco smoke can be responsible for the malfunctioning of the Eustachian tube.

## Eczema In Children

When a skin rash cannot be blamed on poison ivy or chicken pox, the culprit is eczema. In this condition, the skin turns red, scaly and develops sores. The itching is beyond the limit and the skins starts to shed in the form of scales. Dermatitis is the other name for eczema. Dermatitis actually means inflammation of the skin and the skin turns pink and sore. Eczema is a common child problem as out of ten kids at least one kid gets eczema

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and majority of them get it before they turn five years old. Children who are above five years are also at a risk of developing eczema, but once they become teenagers, the chances are negligible.



Not only does eczema dries the skin, it also makes it itch horribly. The skin break out can even take the form of rashes. Eczema is a condition which comes and goes frequently and therefore it is chronic. When any foreign bodies come in contact with the skin, a special kind of cells present in the skin will react to them. Basically, they inflame the skin as a measure of protection. The harmful

foreign objects trigger the reaction and make these special cells to over react. This turns the skin itchy, sore and red. Children, who get eczema frequently, have a larger quantity of these special cells.

Usually, people who have family members with asthma, hay fever or any allergies are more prone to getting eczema. It is in their genes to get eczema and this problem is passed over to them by their parent. Some scientists say that people, who as children have had eczema, are at a higher risk of developing asthma or hay fever later in their life. Allergies can only make eczema worse. The good news is that eczema is not contagious, so children can be happy about not catching the infection. The first symptom of eczema is rash development. These rashes may seem to go away in the beginning, but will return back. Although eczema itches badly, not all rashes will itch. Eczema will start to develop behind the knees and inside of the elbows. It will slowly spread to the face and other body parts.

Because rashes can be caused due to many other reasons apart from eczema, the doctor will examine the rashes and its cause very carefully. If eczema is confirmed, the child may have to use a moisturizing cream or lotion to stop the itchiness and drying of the skin. In serious cases, the patient will be recommended corticosteroids. It is a steroid cream or ointment which needs to be applied to check skin inflammation. If the itching is really irritating, antihistamine can be taken in either liquid or pill form. And if the scratching had resulted in an infection, antibiotics will also be prescribed. The problem doesn't get solved forever, but it makes the condition better for the time being.

There are certain things which trigger eczema and should be avoided by children who get eczema frequently. Perfumes, detergents, soap, dry air in winters with very little moisture, and sweaty and hot skin. Also when coming in contact with dust mites and scratchy fabrics can increase skin irritation. The child must abstain from scratching even

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if the skin is itching badly, as that will make the skin itch more badly. The skin can also get infected with bacteria because of skin breaking and bleeding. A washcloth can be dipped on cool water and placed on the area of itchiness. The parents should cut the nails short of the child so that he/she doesn't hurt himself while scratching. Lastly, lots of water should be consumed to provide moisture to the dry skin.

## Fever In Children



The normal temperature of human body is 98.6°F. If the temperature is taken rectally, the thermometer will show a rise of 1°F, that is it will show 99.6°F. The normal body temperature can vary slightly among individuals. The doctors consider the rise in body temperature as fever if it crosses the mark of 99.4°F when taken orally and

100.4°F when taken rectally. Rectal checking of temperature is done in infants and children who are older than four years have their temperature checked orally. Infants under three months should be rushed to the hospital if they have fever above 100.5°F. The same applies for children older than three months and having a body temperature above 102°F.

Digital thermometers provide a more accurate temperature reading. Mercury thermometers pose a health risk to the family as it is an environmental toxin. Hence, this is another good reason why mercury thermometers should be replaced with digital thermometers. Parents must take few measures before and during the task of checking the child's temperature. First of all, the parent should be sure about the kind of thermometer he or she wants to use, that is whether the thermometer should be meant for oral use or rectal use. The child shouldn't be bundled up very tightly before the temperature is checked. When the thermometer is being held by the child, the parent should supervise the whole procedure. Infants might experience pain when the thermometer is inserted into his rectum. Therefore, it is a good idea to cover the thermometer's tip with petroleum jelly before insertion and only half of the thermometer should be inserted inside. The thermometer should be held until the beep

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is heard as children tend to drop the thermometer, if it is left to them. When taking the temperature orally, the thermometer should be placed underneath the tongue and should be left there until the beep is heard. After usage, the thermometer should be washed with cold water and soap.

When an infection is being fought by the body, it shows signs of fever. When the child becomes fussy and experiences aches in parts of the body, the child should be administered with some medicines. Medicines are available for children, depending on their needs, age and weight. The recommended dosage will be written on the pack or the label of the medicine and the parents should check that chart before giving any medicine to the child. If there is any kind of confusion, a doctor should always be consulted. Medicines like Acetaminophen, Ibuprofen, and Tylenol for children are available over the counter. When acetaminophen is given along with lukewarm bath, it helps decrease the fever. The medicine should be given just before the bath. The water shouldn't be cold and no alcohol products must be used while bathing. If bath is given minus acetaminophen, the child can begin to shiver and there is chance of body temperature going high again.

Aspirin is not advisable for children as it may develop serious illness called Reye's syndrome in the child. The risk is even more in kids having chickenpox or flu. Not more than five doses should be given in twenty four hours. If drops are given, the dropper should be filled till the marked line. A liquid medicine usually comes with a measuring device in the form of a cap. If not, it can be bought at the local drug store. Infants under four months shouldn't be given medicine, unless told by the doctor.

Certain symptoms call for immediate attention and the doctor must be contacted immediately. Symptoms can be dry mouth, rapid change in body temperature, ear-ache, behavioral changes, frequent diarrhea and vomiting, paleness, seizures, skin rashes, intense headaches, sore throat, swollen joints, irritability, high pitch crying, not feeling hungry, stiff neck, stomach ache, whimpering, wheezing, limpness, and breathing problems. At all times, the child must be made to wear comfortable cotton cloths which help the body to breath properly and at the same time absorbs the sweat. The child should also be given fluids constantly, in order to combat with dehydration.

## Flu And Cold In Children

Flu and cold usually accompany each other when attacking a child's immune system. It is a wide spread viral infection and the harsh truth is that there is no permanent treatment designed for it because of the involvement of many types of viruses which

cannot be killed, but yes their growth rate can be suppressed. Symptomatic treatments can trigger the rate of improvement in the child's health, but it might not work for all kids.

The child can get affected by the flu and cold virus when he is exposed to an infected person. The symptoms are mild headache, feeling of tiredness, stuffy or runny nose, watery eyes, light fever, sneezing, cough, muscle aches, and sore throat. It takes two to five days for the symptoms to appear and three to five days for the complete development of the virus. It takes nearly two weeks to completely get rid of the flu. The virus attacks the upper respiratory system. These are the symptoms of cold. The symptoms of flu are more terrible than cold and grow very rapidly. They are high fever, runny nose, sore throat, nasal congestion, chills, fatigue and nausea, vomiting, eye pain and extreme headache. Symptoms are extremely important when trying to differentiate between flu and a cold. As stated before, the symptoms of flu are more severe when compared to the symptoms of cold. Also, it is easier to get over cold than flu. The biggest clue will be recalling any incident of exposure to patients having either flu or cold. Even after thorough analysis, if it is difficult to reach any clear conclusion, a doctor should be consulted. A swab is taken from the nasal track or throat and the results are determined an hour after the test is taken.

No antibiotics work on these viruses. Intake of antibiotics cannot better the condition in any way whatsoever. Also, there are chances of secondary bacterial infections like sinus or ear infection. The child should be administered with fluids and a cool mist humidifier to suppress the symptoms and to help him feel better. Medications are available over the counter which can be bought depending on the symptoms of the infected. Antiviral medicines are available for the treatment of flu, which hasten the recovery process. But the medicines are effective only when given within forty eight hours after the onset of flu symptoms. Runny nose, especially of infants and kids who cannot blow their nose, can be taken care of with the help of a bulb syringe or nasal drop. If flu isn't treated at the right time, it can worsen the health of the infected and can also lead to pneumonia.

Flu is a very commonly spreading infection among school going kids. According to a research, nearly twenty percent of Americans are infected with flu every year and nearly twenty thousand people die because of it. The only way to prevent the child from contracting these virus is by getting him/her a flu shot before the flu season or as recommended by the physician. The vaccine is either administered through a shot or nasal spray. Regular dosage will strengthen the immune system by constructing antibodies. The nasal spray vaccine contains live weakened viruses and shots contain completely dead viruses. By any chance, if the child does get exposed to the virus, he/she should be given medicine meant for flu patients, immediately. More than

hundred viruses are known which cause cold. A lesser number of viruses are known to causes flu. That is the reason why there is a shot for flu and not cold.

But flu shot cannot be taken by anyone or everyone. People who complain of allergic reactions from previous flu shots, people who have the Guillain-Barre syndrome and people allergic to eggs are not eligible for flu shots. It is highly recommended to take advice from a physician before getting vaccinated. Children and elderly should be given nasal spray vaccination, but instead they should opt for flu shots. Out of total population, there are certain people who have a greater probability of getting flu. Children up to five years of age, elders older than sixty five years, nursing home residents, pregnant women, patients with long term problems regarding health, and health care workers who come directly in contact with flu patients.