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LAVANT ROAD
SURGERY

MINOR ILLNESS ADVICE



This guide has been produced by the medical team at Lavant Road Surgery to help you manage your family's health.

You can find further information by contacting NHS Direct on 0845 46 47

or www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

Introduction

Many minor illnesses can be treated at home without needing to come to the surgery. Your local pharmacist can advise about minor illness and using “over the counter” medication. You will find, included in this booklet, our recommendations for your family medicine box and advice on how to manage common minor illnesses at home.

Your family medicine box

- Paracetamol tablets and/or liquid for relief of pain and fever. Always follow pack instructions carefully.
- Antiseptic cream/solution e.g. savlon/ TCP for cleaning wounds/grazes/ spots.
- Menthol crystals or olbas oil to dilute in hot water for steam inhalations to ease catarrh and sinus congestion
- Vapour rub e.g. Vick or Carvol for blocked sinuses and catarrh and useful for children with blocked noses or dry coughs.
- Calamine lotion for dabbing insect bites, sunburn, itchy skin rashes (e.g. chickenpox)
- Anti-histamine tablets ask your pharmacist for advice regarding the most appropriate brand to take. They are useful for hay fever, allergic rashes and itching.
- Dressing strips for minor cuts and grazes, and dry dressing e.g. gauze for cleaning wounds and cuts.
- Crepe bandage to keep dressings in place and to support sprains and strains.
- Thermometer (electronic), normal body temperature is 37 degrees centigrade



- Rehydration salts (e.g. dioralyte) to treat dehydration caused by diarrhoea and vomiting.
- Tweezers to remove splinters
- Moisturising cream (e.g E45) to treat dry patches of skin.

Cough/chesty cough



Most coughs are caused by viruses and will settle in around 2-4 weeks. Young children often get “noisy chests”. This is because they have smaller airways and thinner rib cages than adults. A “noisy chest” is not always a sign of a chest infection. Coughing naturally helps the body fight against infection. Use simple remedies such as honey, hot water and lemon. Cough medicines are unlikely to help.

Make an appointment if:

- You have an underlying lung condition such as asthma, COPD or emphysema
- Shortness of breath
- Wheezing
- Blood in your sputum/phlegm
- Ongoing fevers
- Unexplained weight loss
- Chest pain
- The cough has not improved after 4 weeks

Earache



80% of earache cases will settle within 3-4 days without treatment. To help with discomfort, take regular paracetamol as per directions on the packet.

Make an appointment if:

- Your child is under 2 years old
- Pain is lasting more than 3-4 days
- There is discharge or bleeding from the ear
- There is prolonged deafness or tinnitus (ringing in the ears)
- There is associated fever

Colds



Colds are very common. The average normal, healthy adult will get 5 colds or similar infections a year. For a child - 8. These illnesses are caused by viruses and therefore will not respond to antibiotics. Most colds improve after 2-5 days. You may not feel much like eating but do not worry about this. To help: take paracetamol, drink plenty of fluids and rest as much as possible.

Conjunctivitis



Conjunctivitis is inflammation of the white part of the eye. This is very common and responsible for 35% of eye-related problems seen in GP surgeries. It is caused by irritation, allergy or infection. Ask your pharmacist for advice. Most cases will heal within 1-2 weeks without treatment. Make an appointment if:

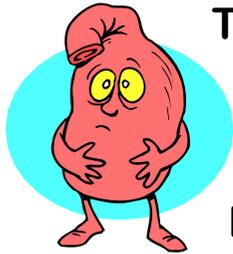
- You have moderate to severe eye pain
- Photosensitivity (excessive sensitivity to light)
- Loss of vision
- Intense redness
- A fever/ feel unwell or have swelling around the eyes
- Symptoms are in a newborn baby

Insect bites/stings



These can cause pain and soreness, and can take several days to settle. If concerned seek advice from your pharmacist. Simple calamine lotion can be very soothing, and anti-histamine tablets can be helpful to ease inflammation and therefore pain. Avoid hot showers/ baths as this can make itching worse. If you have been bitten by a tick, it should be removed using tweezers as close to the skin as possible to extract the whole tick. **DO NOT** use a lit match or Vaseline.

Diarrhoea and vomiting



This usually settles within 1-2 days and is usually caused by a virus. To help with the symptoms, drink plenty of fluids and take Dioralyte (rehydration salts), and rest the stomach by avoiding spicy foods and dairy products.

Make a telephone appointment if:

- You have a baby or young child who is vomiting
- There is blood in the diarrhoea or vomit
- Severe unremitting stomach pain is present
- High fever
- You have recently returned from an exotic holiday
- There is no improvement within 48 hours

Sinusitis



Sinusitis can cause a blocked nose and ears which results in pain involving the forehead and cheeks. 65% of cases are viral, take about a week to settle and do not require treatment. To help: drink plenty of fluids, take paracetamol, try a steam inhalation and rest as much as possible. Ask your pharmacist if a decongestant might be helpful.

Make an appointment if: symptoms last more than 2 weeks and/ or are accompanied by a foul or purulent nasal discharge

Nosebleeds



These usually occur after a blow to the nose but it is not uncommon for the sensitive vessels inside the nose to bleed on minimal irritation, such as blowing the nose. To manage a nosebleed: sit with your head forward and your mouth open and pinch your nose beneath the bone for 10 minutes. Apply an ice pack (wrapped in a cloth) over your forehead for 10 minutes. Once the bleeding has stopped, avoid hot drinks and blowing your nose for 12 hours and sleep on 2-3 pillows to keep your head elevated. If the nosebleed does not settle after 10 minutes, or you are taking warfarin or aspirin, attend Accident and Emergency.

Sore Throat

The majority of sore throats are caused by viruses and do not need antibiotics. They usually settle over 3-4 days.

Take regular paracetamol, drink lots of fluids, and eat soft foods.

Make an appointment if:

- You or your child feel very unwell and/ or are running a high temperature.
- If the sore throat is not settling after 2 weeks or you are persistently hoarse
- You have a reduced immune system



You do not need to look in your child's throat, but if you do, and see enlarged tonsils, this is quite normal.

Back Pain



Back pain is normally caused by a sudden movement or injury and can result in painful muscular spasm. To help: take regular paracetamol, and ibuprofen unless you have a history of asthma or stomach ulceration, apply heat packs or a hot water bottle (with a cover) to the affected area. Avoid rest and try to keep mobile, as well as maintain a good posture.

Obtain medical advice ASAP if:

- Pain is severe
- Does not settle after a few days
- Is associated with numbness/weakness in the legs or problems with bladder or bowels

Sprains/strains

These are common injuries and occur when a ligament around a joint has been stretched, twisted or torn, causing inflammation, bruising, swelling and pain.

Immediate treatment is based on resting the affected limb, applying an ice pack (e.g. a pack of frozen peas wrapped in a towel, **NEVER** apply an ice pack directly to the skin), using a support such as tubigrip or bandage and elevating the affected limb.



Seek medical advice if:

1. You are in severe pain and cannot put weight on the affected limb
2. The injured area looks crooked or has lumps and bumps
3. You cannot move the affected part
4. The limb gives way when you try and put weight on it
5. You have numbness in any part of the injured area
6. Your pain has not improved after 4 days

THE REST OF THIS BOOKLET IS AIMED SPECIFICALLY AT CHILDHOOD AILMENTS

Children with a temperature



Children can often respond to infections by developing a fever. This is a normal response. Most infections are caused by viruses rather than bacteria and therefore do not require an antibiotic. If your child develops a fever (temperature above 37 degrees centigrade)

- 1) Give regular paracetamol liquid e.g Calpol as per directions. For children under the age of 1 year, consult your pharmacist for advice regarding recommended dosages.
- 2) Give plenty of liquids. Clear, cool fluids are best such as water and dilute squash. Give small sips every 5 minutes. Ice lollies can be helpful to encourage young children to take fluids.
- 3) Dress your child in loose, cotton clothing. Keep the room as cool as possible. Use an electric fan if available.

Obtain medical advice ASAP if:

- Your child is not drinking enough fluids
- There are less wet nappies as per usual
- Your child seems drowsy/ disinterested or floppy
- your child has a high pitched cry and/ or cannot be settled

Children not eating/drinking

Children often eat/ drink less when they are unwell. This is not unusual. Most will start to drink before the risk of dehydration. Children can go for several days without eating much, this will not harm them. However you should be aware of the early signs of dehydration such as drowsiness/dry eyes/mouth or passing less urine. This is especially so for young children (under 1 year) and those who are vomiting.

Childhood rashes

If your child has a rash which disappears when a glass is pressed against it, then the rash is probably due to a virus and will likely settle within a few days.

Any rash which does not disappear is classed as a medical emergency and you should call 999.

Chickenpox

This rash is due to a specific virus. Your child can appear unwell shortly before the rash appears, as patches of itchy blisters. Your child is infectious until the last crops of blisters have scabbed over. To help: keep your child cool (follow advice for managing temperatures), and apply calamine lotion.

Possible serious illness in children

Seek urgent medical advice if:

- Your child is excessively irritable or drowsy, or slow to respond

- They have breathing problems including rapid breathing/being short of breath or working hard to breathe. Sometimes this can appear as though the skin between and below the ribs gets sucked in each time they take a breath.
- Cold or discoloured hands or feet with a warm body
- Severe arm/leg pain (for no obvious reason)
- Unusual skin colour (pale/blue or dusky around the lips)
- High temperature (over 40 degrees centigrade, or a temperature which does not settle with treatment)
- There is an unusually high pitched/ weak or continuous cry
- There are signs of dehydration

Remember we are here to help: 01243 527264.

Between the hours of 6:30pm-08:00 am, and at weekends and bank holidays, call 0300 130 1313 and follow the directions given.

We hope this guide has been helpful

The Team at 8 Lavant Road