

Most infections that patients develop in the community get better on their own without needing any medical attention.

For many illnesses self-help is the first port of call – see the link below

[Self Help for illnesses a guide for patients](#)

This leaflet gives you a way of managing your infection in the community and when to take medical advice when a more serious illness might be developing
Most upper respiratory tract infections get better on their own and often antibiotics have only a minimal effect on the duration of the illness **Adults**

What to expect from most upper respiratory tract infection - click the links below

1. [Royal college GPs guide to respiratory infections](#)

2. [When should I worry?](#)

Middle-ear infection	8 days	1. Have plenty of rest. 2. Drink enough fluids to avoid feeling thirsty.	<p>The following are possible signs of serious illness and should be assessed urgently:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If your skin is very cold or has a strange colour, or you develop an unusual rash. 2. If you feel confused or have slurred speech or are very drowsy. 3. If you have difficulty breathing. Signs that suggest breathing problems can include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • breathing quickly • turning blue around the lips and the skin below the mouth • skin between or above the ribs getting sucked or pulled in with every breath. 4. If you develop a severe headache and are sick. 5. If you develop chest pain. 6. If you have difficulty swallowing or are drooling. 7. If you cough up blood. 8. If you are feeling a lot worse. <p>If you or your child has any of these symptoms, are getting worse or are sicker than you would expect (even if the temperature falls), trust your instincts and seek medical advice urgently from NHS 111 or your GP. If a child under the age of 5 has any of symptoms 1–3 go to A&E immediately or call 999.</p> <p>Less serious signs that can usually wait until the next available appointment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 9. If you are not starting to improve a little by the time given in the 'Most are better by' column. 10. In children with middle-ear infection: if fluid is coming out of their ears or if they have new deafness. 11. Mild side effects such as diarrhoea, however seek medical attention if you're concerned.
Sore throat	7-8 days	3. Ask your local pharmacist to recommend medicines to help your symptoms or pain (or both).	
Sinusitis	14-21 days		
Common cold	14 days	4. Fever is a sign the body is fighting the infection and usually gets better by itself in most cases. You can use paracetamol if you or your child are uncomfortable as a result of a fever.	
Cough or bronchitis	21 days		

Signs of more serious symptoms in adults If any of these develop you should call 111	Chest Pain, coughing blood, problems swallowing, feeling a lot worse, severe headache, trouble breathing, very cold skin, feeling confused
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Sepsis in adults and children

Sepsis is a life-threatening condition triggered by infection that affects the function of the organs. It is treated most effectively if recognised early.
The leaflet below is a useful guide of when to be concerned

Adults

[**Sepsis Information Leaflet**](#)

Children

[**Sepsis Information Leaflet**](#)

Other infections

[Coronavirus](#)

[Urinary tract infections](#)

Children

Having an ill child can be a very scary experience for parents.

The links below are very helpful guides for you.

[When should I worry? - A guide to coughs colds, earache & sore throats](#)

[Guide to the common cold and childhood infections](#)



This booklet above for parents (and older children) and deals with common infections in children who are normally healthy. It is not meant for children who have ongoing health problems such as asthma, heart, or kidney problems.

You should not rely on the advice in this leaflet for children who are less than 3 months old. Babies younger than this can respond differently to infections.

Here are some other useful leaflets

[Fever in Children](#)

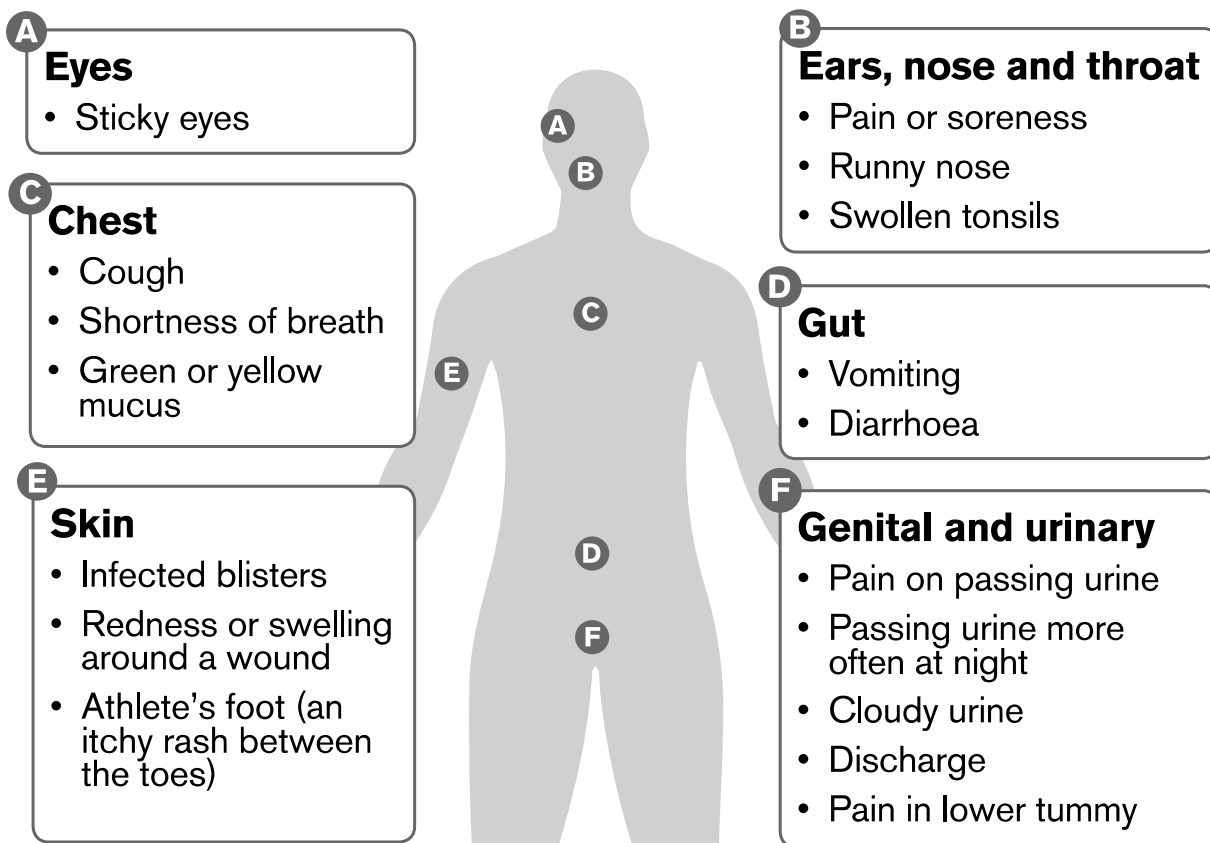
Caring for children with cough

 <p>RED</p>	<p>If your child has any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Becomes pale, mottled and feels abnormally cold to the touch Has pauses in their breathing (apnoeas), has an irregular breathing pattern or starts grunting Severe difficulty in breathing becoming agitated or unresponsive Is going blue round the lips Has a fit/seizure Becomes extremely distressed (crying inconsolably despite distraction), confused, very lethargic (difficult to wake) or unresponsive Develops a rash that does not disappear with pressure (the 'Glass test') Has testicular pain, especially in teenage boys 	<p>You need urgent help:</p> <p>Go to the nearest A&E department or phone 999</p>
 <p>AMBER</p>	<p>If your child has any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is finding it hard to breathe including drawing in of the muscles below their lower ribs, at their neck or between their ribs (recession) or head bobbing Seems dehydrated (dry mouth, sunken eyes, no tears, drowsy or passing less urine than usual) Is becoming drowsy (excessively sleepy) or irritable (unable to settle them with toys, TV, food or picking up) - especially if they remain drowsy or irritable despite their fever coming down Has extreme shivering or complains of muscle pain Babies under 3 months of age with a temperature above 38°C /100.4°F Infants 3-6 months of age with a temperature above 39°C /102.2°F For all infants and children with a fever above 38°C for more than 5 days. Is getting worse or if you are worried Has persistent vomiting and/or persistent severe abdominal pain Has blood in their poo or wee Any limb injury causing reduced movement, persistent pain or head injury causing persistent crying or drowsiness 	<p>You need to contact a doctor or nurse today.</p> <p>Please ring your GP surgery or call NHS 111 - dial 111</p> <p>The NHS is working for you. However, we recognise during the current coronavirus crisis at peak times, access to a health care professional may be delayed.</p> <p>If symptoms persist for 4 hours or more and you have not been able to speak to either a GP or 111, then take your child to the nearest A&E</p>
 <p>GREEN</p>	<p>If none of the above features are present</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can continue to provide your childcare at home. Information is also available on NHS Choices Additional advice is available to families for coping with crying of well babies Additional advice is available for children with complex health needs and disabilities. 	<p>Self care</p> <p>Continue providing your child's care at home. If you are still concerned about your child, call NHS 111 - dial 111</p>

How can I manage my common infection?

A leaflet for adults aged 16 years and over

1. What are the symptoms of a common infection?



2. What if I think I have coronavirus (Covid-19)?

If you think you may have COVID-19 then please visit <http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> or <http://www.nhs.uk> for the latest guidance and information.

3. How can I treat a common infection?



Get plenty of rest until you feel better.



Take pain relief if you need to (make sure you follow the instructions).



Drink plenty of fluids (6 to 8 drinks, or 2 litres) so that you pass pale-coloured urine regularly.



For **coughs**, try honey and cough medicines.
For **sore throats**, try medicated lozenges and pain relief.



Soothe **eye infections** with a clean warm or cold damp flannel.



For an **outer ear infection**, apply local heat (such as a warm flannel).

4. How long could my infection last?

Cough



21 days

**Sore throat
or earache**



7 to 8 days

**Common
cold**



14 days

Norovirus
(winter vomiting)



2 to 3 days

**Sinus
infection**



14 to 21 days

Contact your GP if your symptoms are getting worse
or if you are not better by the times above.

Visit www.nhs.uk for **self-care advice** on common infections

5. Will my infection need antibiotics to get better?

- Your **body can normally fight off** common infections on its own.
- You do not usually need antibiotics, unless symptoms of a **bacterial** infection (such as a urine infection) are severe – a healthcare professional can advise you on this.
- Taking antibiotics when you do not need to puts you and your family at risk.
- Follow your **healthcare professional's advice on antibiotics**.



Find out more about antibiotics at www.antibioticguardian.com

6. How can I stop my infection from spreading?

If you need to cough or sneeze:

Catch it



with a tissue (or
your inner elbow)

Bin it



throw away
used tissues

Kill it



by cleaning
your hands

Clean hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or hand sanitiser:

- ✓ before preparing and eating food
- ✓ after touching pets or animals
- ✓ after using the toilet
- ✓ when leaving and arriving home



Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unclean hands.

If possible, **keep your distance from others** (2 meters or 6 feet), especially vulnerable people in your household.



Do not share items that come into contact with your mouth, such as eating utensils and toothbrushes.



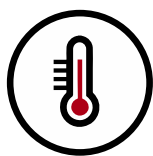
Keep yourself and your family **up to date with vaccinations**.
Always get winter vaccines (such as flu) if you are eligible.

Visit or call a **pharmacy for further advice** on common infections

7. What symptoms of serious illness should I look out for?



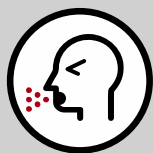
Severe headache and vomiting



Ongoing **fever or chills**
(temperature above 38°C or less than 36°C)



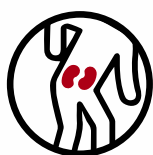
Problems **swallowing**
Turning blue around the mouth



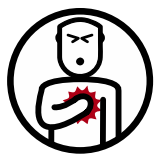
Coughing **blood**



Breathing faster or slower than usual



Kidney pain in your back just under your ribs



Chest pain or tightness
New **very fast or slow pulse**



Visible **blood** in urine
Severe pain on passing urine, or passing more urine at night
Cloudy urine not improving in 1 to 2 days with fluids

If you have the symptoms above, contact your GP urgently or use the following services for your region.

NHS England



When it's less urgent than 999

www.111.nhs.uk

NHS Direct Wales



www.111.wales.nhs.uk

NHS Scotland



www.nhs24.scot

Northern Ireland



Contact your GP practice

These services can provide a confidential interpreter if you need one.

8. What if I suspect signs of sepsis?

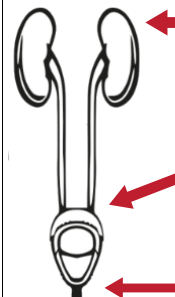
Sepsis is a life-threatening reaction to an infection. Possible signs are:

- **s**lurred speech, confusion or drowsiness
- **e**xtrême shivering
- **p**assing no urine in a day
- **s**evere breathlessness
- **i**t feels like you're going to die, and
- **s**kin blotchy or discoloured.

Call 999 immediately if you or others have signs of sepsis

TREATING YOUR INFECTION – URINARY TRACT INFECTION (UTI)

For women under 65 years with suspected lower urinary tract infections (UTIs) or lower recurrent UTIs (cystitis or urethritis)

Possible urinary signs & symptoms	The outcome	Recommended care	Types of urinary tract infection
<p>Key signs/symptoms: Dysuria: Burning pain when passing urine (wee) New nocturia: Needing to pass urine in the night Cloudy urine: Visible cloudy colour when passing urine</p> <p>Other signs/symptoms to consider: Frequency: Passing urine more often than usual Urgency: Feeling the need to pass urine immediately Haematuria: Blood in your urine Suprapubic pain: Pain in your lower tummy</p> <p>Other things to consider: Recent sexual history <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inflammation due to sexual activity can feel similar to the symptoms of a UTI Some sexually transmitted infections (STIs) can have symptoms similar to those of a UTI Changes during menopause <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some changes during the menopause can have symptoms similar to those of a UTI </p>	<p>Non-pregnant women: <input type="checkbox"/> If none or only one of: dysuria, new nocturia, cloudy urine; AND/OR vaginal discharge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UTI much less likely You may need a urine test to check for a UTI Antibiotics less likely to help Usually lasts 5 to 7 days </p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> If 2 or more of: dysuria, new nocturia, cloudy urine; OR bacteria detected in urine; AND NO vaginal discharge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> UTI more likely; antibiotics should help You should start to improve within 48 hours Symptoms usually last 3 days </p> <p>Pregnant women: Always request urine culture <input type="checkbox"/> If suspected UTI</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Self-care and pain relief. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Symptoms may get better on their own </p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Delayed or backup prescription with self-care and pain relief Start antibiotics if symptoms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get worse Do not get a little better with self-care within 48 hours </p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Immediate antibiotic prescription plus self-care</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> If mild symptoms, delayed or back-up antibiotic prescription plus self-care</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Immediate antibiotic prescription plus self-care</p>	<p>UTIs are caused by bacteria getting into your urethra or bladder, usually from your gut. Infections may occur in different parts of the urinary tract.</p>  <p>Kidneys (make urine) Infection in the upper urinary tract <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pyelonephritis (pie-lo-nef-right-is). Not covered in this leaflet and always needs antibiotics </p> <p>Bladder (stores urine) Infection in the lower urinary tract <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cystitis (sis-tight-is). </p> <p>Urethra (takes urine out of the body) Infection or inflammation in the urethra <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urethritis (your-ith-right-is) </p>
<p>If you think you may have COVID-19 then please visit http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus or http://www.nhs.uk for the latest guidance and information</p>			
Self-care to help yourself get better more quickly	Options to help prevent a UTI	Antibiotic resistance	When should you get help? Contact your GP practice or contact NHS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drink enough fluids to stop you feeling thirsty. Aim to drink 6 to 8 glasses Avoid too much alcohol, fizzy drinks or caffeine that can irritate your bladder Take paracetamol or ibuprofen at regular intervals for pain relief, if you have had no previous side effects There is currently no evidence to support taking cranberry products or cystitis sachets to improve your symptoms Consider the risk factors in the 'Options to help prevent UTI' column to reduce future UTIs 	<p>It may help you to consider these risk factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stop bacteria spreading from your bowel into your bladder. Wipe from front (vagina) to back (bottom) after using the toilet. Avoid waiting to pass urine. Pass urine as soon as you need to. Go for a wee after having sex to flush out any bacteria that may be near the opening to the urethra. Wash the external vagina area with water before and after sex to wash away any bacteria that may be near the opening to the urethra. Drink enough fluids to make sure you wee regularly throughout the day, especially during hot weather. <p>If you have a recurrent UTI, the following may help</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cranberry products and D-mannose: There is some evidence to say that these work to help prevent recurrent UTI After the menopause: Topical hormonal treatment may help; for example, vaginal pessaries. Antibiotics at night or after sex may be considered 	<p>Antibiotics can be lifesaving. But antibiotics are not always needed for urinary symptoms.</p> <p>Antibiotics taken by mouth, for any reason, affect our gut bacteria making some resistant.</p> <p>This may make future UTI more difficult to treat</p> <p>Common side effects to taking antibiotics include thrush, rashes, vomiting and diarrhoea. Seek medical advice if you are worried.</p> <p>Keep antibiotics working; only take them when advised by a health professional. This way they are more likely to work for a future UTI.</p>	<p>The following symptoms are possible signs of serious infection and should be assessed urgently.</p> <p>Phone for advice if you are not sure how urgent the symptoms are.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> You have shivering, chills and muscle pain You feel confused, or are very drowsy You have not passed urine all day You are vomiting You see blood in your urine Your temperature is above 38°C or less than 36°C. You have kidney pain in your back just under the ribs Your symptoms get worse Your symptoms are not starting to improve within 48 hours of taking antibiotics