

# CHILDHOOD ILLNESSES

**DIRECTIONS:** You will need to read the following information to help you complete the worksheet "Let's Play Doctor."

## ALLERGIES

An allergy is the body's reaction to a foreign substance, such as a food or medicine, an inhaled particle like pollen or dust, or skin contact with a substance, like soap or wool. Symptoms of allergies vary and include any of the following:

Wheezing Runny nose Watery, itchy eyes, Skin irritations, Hives, Itchy welts, Congestion, Diarrhea, Vomiting

## ASTHMA

Asthma is a respiratory condition in which the airway to the lungs becomes temporarily narrowed due to contractions of the muscle around the respiratory passages. The narrowing causes respiratory distress and difficulty in breathing out or exhaling. The classic symptom is a whistling noise, known as wheezing, made during breathing out or exhaling. The medications available for relief contain the common ingredient theophylline. This drug relaxes the muscles in the bronchial tubes and relieves the narrowing. Children with severe asthma may need to take medication every day between attacks. Asthma can be prevented by avoiding contact with known triggers or causes.

## COLDS

Colds are caused by thousands of different viruses. Because of this, it is impossible to create a vaccine for colds. Colds can be transmitted by handling an infected object. Most infants that catch several colds have symptoms of a runny nose, sneezing and coughing. For treatment, the infant's doctor should be consulted. Acetaminophen can be used to reduce the fever.

## COLIC

Colic is a regular 'fussy period' It usually occurs in the evenings and lasts several hours. The infant usually screams as if in pain, often pulling up his/her legs. Colic is a fairly vague and undefined condition which refers to unexplained excessive crying in an otherwise healthy infant. Colic usually begins during the second or third week of life and disappears by the third month. Although the cause of colic has not been proven, some of the following have been considered responsible:

A very sensitive nervous system

Reaction to the day's stimulation

A sensitive digestive system

Trapped gas

Sensitivity to certain foods in the breast-feeding mother's diet

### Some remedies are to:

Swaddle the infant

Hold and rock the infant

Hold the baby in the football hold

Place a hot water bottle on the infants' stomach

Provide the infant with a relaxed and calm environment

Burp the infant often while he/she is eating

## CHICKEN POX

Chicken pox is a common childhood disease that lasts about a week. An itchy rash and fever are classic symptoms. It is caused by a virus that is related to the herpes virus. To treat chicken pox you can give acetaminophen to the child to reduce the fever and make the child feel more comfortable. DO NOT GIVE A CHILD WITH THE CHICKENPOX ASPIRIN, as Reye's syndrome may result. The chickenpox is highly contagious and after exposure to someone who has chickenpox, there is an 85% chance that the child will get it. The incubation period is from 11-21 days; however, most children come down with chickenpox between the 14 and 15th day after exposure.

## CONSTIPATION

Constipation is a change in the regular pattern of bowel movements toward infrequent stools of firmer consistency and passed with difficulty. It is caused by a change in diet, too little water intake, a change in activity level, or intestinal problems. Treatment includes dietary changes, the use of oral agents that act in the intestine to relieve constipation or to use an infant glycerin suppository or an enema to produce a stool. In breast-fed infants, constipation is rare. Specific treatment for bottle-fed infants is the addition of 1 tablespoon of Karo syrup to each bottle. Karo acts in the gut to draw water into the bowel and keep stools loose.

## CRADLE CAP

Dirty-appearing, crusty or oily patches on the scalp are known as cradle cap. Washing the scalp daily with soap and water will clear up most cases. Applying oil to the scalp will clog the pores and make the condition worsen. Applying oil before shampooing will loosen the patches and help the condition. Cradle cap seldom lasts beyond the first few months.

## CROUP

A viral infection of the upper airway that causes inflammation in the area around and below the vocal cords is known as croup. This inflammation causes difficulty inhaling air into the lungs. Croup causes a child to have a hoarse or barking cough, often called a "croupy cough". It can even sound like a seal bark. Croup can be treated by a cool-mist vaporizer and drinking a lot of clear fluids.

## DIARRHEA

Diarrhea is an increase in the number of bowel movements that are looser than usual and may contain large amounts of water. It is one of the most common illnesses during infancy. Diarrhea is usually caused by an infection and viruses cause a large portion of diarrhea. Diarrhea is a serious condition for infants as dehydration can occur. Diarrhea should be treated by feeding the infant generous amounts of clear liquids such as a solution of sugar and electrolytes such as the name brands Pedialyte or Lytren. A doctor should also be consulted.

## DIPHTHERIA

Diphtheria develops in the throat. Early symptoms include sore throat, a slight fever, and chills. If left untreated, the disease can interfere with the passage of air, causing suffocation. The bacteria may produce a poison which results in pneumonia and heart failure.

## FLU

Influenza, more commonly known as "the flu", is caused by a specific group of viruses. The illness comes on suddenly, accompanied by fever, chills, muscle aches, fatigue, and weakness. In contrast to the common cold, there is a dry nose, dry cough, and red eyes. Influenza vaccines have been developed for persons at high risk such as pregnant women, infants, and the elderly. Influenza is spread by infectious virus particles that have been coughed or sneezed into the air. Once the out-break has begun children should avoid crowded places. Rest, fluids and doses of acetaminophen are part of typical treatment for the flu. If the child has a persistent fever or worsening of symptoms, a doctor should be consulted, as the onset of pneumonia may occur.

## HEPATITIS B

Hepatitis B is an infection of the liver caused by a virus called HBV (Hepatitis B Virus). This viral infection may occur in two phases. The first phase is the acute phase. The acute phase may cause mild flu-like symptoms, diminished appetite, fatigue, abdominal pain, an enlarged liver, jaundice, dark-colored urine, light-colored bowel movements, mild fever or diarrhea. It may take 28-160 days after exposure for these symptoms to become apparent. Over half of the people who become infected with HBV never become sick, but may later have long-term liver disease from the infection. Some people will recover from the acute phase; others will go into the chronic phase and remain infected for the rest of their lives. They will become "chronic carriers". The virus remains in their liver and blood and they can spread the infection to others throughout their lifetime. They can develop long-term liver disease such as cirrhosis or liver cancer. Hepatitis B is spread through blood, semen and vaginal fluids. High risk activities include having sex, sharing needles, and sharing personal care items (razors, toothbrushes, nail clippers) with an infected person. It can also be spread from an infected mother to her unborn baby. It is important to note that the virus can remain alive even in dried blood for up to 30 days.

## HIB

HIB disease is caused by bacteria called Haemophilus influenzae type b-or HIB. It attacks one out of every 200 children in the United States before the age of five. HIB causes over half of all cases of meningitis in children (a disease that attacks the area around the brain and spinal cord). About 5% of children who develop HIB meningitis may die, regardless of the treatment they receive. For those who survive, many have permanent damage that can include physical disabilities, mental retardation, and hearing loss. There is another life-threatening disease often caused by Hie. It is "epiglottitis", an infection that causes swelling of the epiglottis (a small flap at the back of the throat that prevents food from going down the windpipe). If not treated immediately, this swelling could block the windpipe and cause death. HIB infection can also cause other serious medical problems such as infections of the joints, bones, lungs, and the skin tissue.

## IMPETIGO

This usually starts as a small red pimple that develops a watery head and quickly ruptures to leave a weepy raw area that spreads. A scab soon forms, giving the sore a "honey-crusted" appearance. It is commonly found near the corner of the mouth or nostril but can be found anywhere on the body. It is also frequently found in the diaper area. It should be treated with a local washing and the application of an antibiotic ointment, such as Spectrocin, Bacitracin, or Polysporin.

## INFECTION

An invasion of micro-organisms in the body which cause disease is called an infection. Examples are upper respiratory infections (colds) and ear infections.

## MEASLES

Measles is the most serious of the common childhood illnesses. It is caused by a virus and begins with several days of unexplained high fever before the onset of the typical rash. The child is likely to have a cough, runny nose, and watery eyes. The illness lasts one to two weeks. About one out of every 1000 children who gets measles will develop encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain. This can lead to convulsions, permanent deafness, and mental retardation. Routine immunization has nearly eliminated measles in the United States. A primary dosage is given at 15 months of age.

## MUMPS

Mumps virus is spread by person to person contact and may result in fever, headache, earaches, and painfully swollen glands on the face and neck. The disease can cause deafness, diabetes, and brain damage, but disabling complications are rare. The testicles and ovaries, pancreas, and breasts are glands that also can become inflamed during the illness. Mumps encephalitis and meningitis can also occur, and permanent deafness is a recognized complication. In teenage and adult males, mumps can cause sterility. A primary dosage is given at 15 months of age.

## PERTUSSIS

Pertussis or whooping cough is caused by bacteria found in the mouth, nose and throat of an infected person. At first, the disease resembles a common cold, accompanied by an irritating cough. The cough increases in intensity and occurs in violent and prolonged spasms with high-pitched sounds between spasms. Severe cases result in convulsions, collapse of the lungs, pneumonia, and brain damage.

## POLIO

Poliomyelitis (infantile paralysis) is a viral disease that often cripples and sometimes kills. When symptoms are present, they include fever, sore throats, nausea, headache, stomach ache, and pain and stiffness in the neck, back and legs. There is no specific treatment for polio, and the degree of recovery varies from patient to patient.

## ROSEOLA

Roseola is a common childhood illness with a fever, followed by a rash, occurring most often between six months to three years of age. The symptoms are the onset of a high fever, sometimes as high as 104 F. The fever lasts about three days. After the three days, there is a sudden drop in the fever to normal or below normal and a faint pink pinpoint rash will appear. The rash is mainly on the torso and is usually gone within 24 hours. No specific treatment is needed because by the time the rash appears, the child is essentially well. As always, the fever should be treated by drinking large quantities of clear fluids and taking acetaminophen.

## RUBELLA

Rubella is also called German measles; rubella symptoms include a slight fever and perhaps a rash. Recovery is usually speedy and complete. However, rubella can have serious effects on a pregnant woman who may catch the disease from a child. Rubella can cause a miscarriage or lead to birth defects in the baby.

## SCABIES

Scabies is an itchy skin infection caused by an insect mite that burrows into the skin and lays her eggs. Scabies classically causes little bumps with raised lines where the mites burrow in. The sores are found mostly on the wrists, ankles, between the fingers, in the armpits, behind the knees, in the crease on the elbow, and in the groin area. They are very itchy, especially at night and when it is warm. The sores and surrounding areas may be scabbed over due to scratching. In infants scabies may look different. Burrows may be absent, and the itchy bumps may be present on the face, scalp, palms, and soles of the feet. These sites are uncommon in older children. A physician should diagnose scabies, and they will usually prescribe Kwell cream or lotion for treatment.

## SORE THROATS

Sore throats are the most common infection in childhood. Infections of bacteria or viruses cause sore throats. Bacterial sore throats are identified as "Strep" throat infections and should be treated with antibiotics to prevent spreading and complications which include rheumatic fever. Viral sore throats usually are cured in a few days without any treatment. 90% of sore throats that children get are upper respiratory viral infections.

## STREP THROAT

Strep throat is a bacterial virus that must be treated with an antibiotic. A throat culture must be taken to diagnose strep throat. Symptoms include a mild to severe sore throat, with white patches on the tonsils, tiny red dots at the back of the roof of the mouth, foul breath, lymph nodes in the neck are often enlarged and tender, a fever and headache, a stomach ache, vomiting, and a runny nose. A child should receive an antibiotic such as penicillin.

## TETANUS

Tetanus, commonly called lockjaw, occurs in children and adults with about the same frequency. The bacteria, most commonly found in the soil, generally enter the body through deep puncture wounds and lacerations. Disease symptoms include headache, irritability and muscular stiffness. The jaw, neck, and limbs become locked in spasm. Convulsions may cause heart failure or suffocation.

## THRUSH/MONILIA

Yeast are germs that live naturally in the mouth, gastrointestinal tract, and vagina in balance with other organisms. When the growth of yeast gets out of balance with the other germs, a yeast infection occurs. Thrush and monilia are types of yeast infections. They are most likely to occur after the treatment of an antibiotic. Because yeast is so prevalent, nearly every infant develops a yeast infection either in the mouth or diaper area. Yeast grows best in a moist environment, making the mouth and diaper area and skin creases, such as the neck and armpit, extremely susceptible. Yeast in the mouth is known as thrush. It causes white patches on the inside of the cheeks and lips, the tongue, and the roof of the mouth. It is treated with a prescribed medication given by a dropper into the mouth. Yeast in the diaper area is known as monilia and it is very red with little bumps, especially at the edge of the rash. This type of yeast infection is treated with a prescribed cream applied to the infected area.

## VIRUS

A virus is a microscopic germ that invades the tissues or cells of the body and grow and multiply rapidly. They interfere with the normal functions of the cells and cause some cells in the body to be destroyed. For example, Polio causes some cells in the body to be destroyed. Diphtheria or a cold releases poisons into the body. To help prevent an infant from catching a virus, keep them clean and away from other people who have a virus.