

If a child in your care is ill or injured, choose from the following services available:

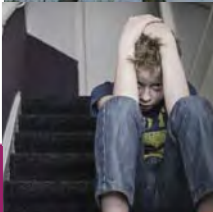
Concern	Service	What to do?
Grazed knee Sore throat Coughs and colds	<b>Self Care</b>	You can treat minor illnesses and injuries at home by using the recommended medicines and making sure they get plenty of rest <a href="http://www.nhs.uk">www.nhs.uk</a> .
As a parent if you are: Unsure Confused Need help	 <b>NHS 111</b> For 24 hour health advice and information.	Call NHS 111 when it is less urgent than 999 Tel: 111 <a href="http://www.nhs.uk/111">www.nhs.uk/111</a>
Mild diarrhoea Mild skin irritations (including spots/rash) Mild fever	<b>Pharmacist</b> For advice on common illnesses, injuries and medication.	To find your local pharmacy and its contact details visit: <a href="http://www.nhs.uk/chemist">www.nhs.uk/chemist</a>
High temperature Head injuries not involving loss of consciousness Persistent cough Worsening health conditions (inside GP hours) Minor bumps, cuts and possible fractures Dehydrated Headache Abdominal pain	<b>GP</b> For the treatment of illnesses and injuries that will not go away.	Write your GP's (family doctor) telephone number here: <input type="text"/> Use NHS 111 out-of-hours service
Severe pain Worsening health conditions Choking Loss of consciousness Fitting/convulsions Broken bones	<b>Urgent Care</b> When you need healthcare in a hurry 24 hours a day.  <b>A&amp;E or 999</b> For serious and life-threatening emergencies.	<b>A&amp;E</b>

NHS 111 is free to call from any landline or contract mobile phone. Pay-as-you-go mobile phones require 1 pence credit to make a call.

# A Parent's Guide

Children aged 5-11

## Common childhood illnesses & well-being





# Welcome

During these years we can start to lay the foundations for positive long-term development.

It is also the perfect time for families to adopt a positive attitude to their health and well-being.

If parents are confident they are doing all they can to make sure their children are safe, well-nourished, play and learn actively and create opportunities which build social and emotional confidence, they can rest assured that they are doing all they can to lay the path for a happy and positive future.

As well as general well-being, this handbook will help you to understand when is the right time to call **NHS 111**, visit your GP, chat to your school nurse or take a visit to your local pharmacy.

Every parent wants to know what to do if their child is unwell and how to recognise the signs. Trust your instincts, you know your child best, so if you are worried get further advice.

To view the latest version of this booklet online visit [www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk](http://www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk)

All factual content has been sourced from Department of Health, NHS Choices, British Association of Dermatologists, Meningitis Now, NICE. This information cannot replace specialist care. If you are worried get further advice, you know your child best.



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### Your contacts

GP:  
.....

Nearest pharmacy:  
.....

School:  
.....

Dentist:  
.....

# A guide to services

There are a wide range of healthcare and children and family services.  
See which service or professional is best to help you.



## Self care

Many illnesses can be treated in your home by using over the counter medicine from your pharmacist and getting plenty of rest. Self care is the best choice to treat very minor illnesses and injuries. If you are still worried call **NHS 111** or your GP.



## 111



If you think you need help urgently during the day or night you should call **NHS 111** before you go to any other health service.

By calling **NHS 111** you will be directed straight away to the local service that can help you best. It is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and is free to call, including from a mobile. You should call **NHS 111**:

- When you need help fast but it's not life threatening.
- When you think you need to go to A&E or another NHS urgent care service.
- When it's outside of your GP's surgery hours.
- When you do not know who to call for medical help.
- If you do not have a local GP to call.



## Pharmacist

Your local pharmacist can provide advice on most common health issues and can suggest and dispense medicines. There are often pharmacists in supermarkets and many are open late.

Visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) to find the pharmacy nearest to you.



## GP (Doctor)

You will need to register with a local GP. Your GP can advise, give you the medicines you need and point you in the right direction if you need other specialist services. You will usually need to make an appointment. All GPs will see a child quickly if you are worried. After 6.30pm weekdays, at weekends and public holidays you can call the GP out-of-hours service on **NHS 111**.



## Dentist

Make sure you see a dentist on a regular basis. Discuss registering your child early on with your dentist and take them with you to appointments. To find your nearest dentist visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) For out-of-hours dentist information call **NHS 111**.



## School nurse

Once your child reaches school age, the School Nursing Team and school staff will help support your child's health and development. Your school nurse can advise on minor illness and injury, health and well-being. They can offer support and information around healthy lifestyles.



## A&E & 999

**For serious and life-threatening emergencies.** **A&E** and **999** are emergency services that should only be used when children are badly injured or show symptoms of critical illness. These may be choking or breathing difficulties, unconscious or unaware of surroundings, taken poison or tablets, severe abdominal pain, suggesting dehydration.

# Know the basics

## Being prepared and knowing the signs

Parents are usually good at noticing when something is wrong. However, it is normal to worry that you won't recognise the signs that your child is unwell. Trust your instincts, you know your child best.

Learn how to spot the signs of serious illness and how to cope if an accident happens. If you know the basics and you are prepared, you will find it easier to cope.

**Keep a small supply of useful medicines** in a **locked cabinet** or **somewhere up high** where a child cannot reach them. See box on the right, for things to have at home just in case. **Make sure you've got the right strength of medicine for the age of your child**, always follow instructions carefully and check use by dates. Read the label carefully. **Do not give aspirin to children under 16.**

Find out about CPR (resuscitation) before a possible emergency, visit [www.redcrossfirstaidtraining.co.uk](http://www.redcrossfirstaidtraining.co.uk)

**If your child seems to have a serious illness get medical help straight away.**

### Paracetamol and ibuprofen

Consider using either **sugar-free** paracetamol or ibuprofen for children with fever who appear distressed (as a general rule a temperature of over 37.5°C 99.5°F), as these can help to reduce fever and distress. Treat them with either paracetamol **OR** ibuprofen in the first instance. It can take up to an hour for either of them to work. Paracetamol and ibuprofen should **NOT** be given together at the same time. However, if your child remains distressed before the next dose is due, then you may want to try a dose of the other medicine. Aspirin should not be given to children under 16 years of age.



### Pharmacist says

Keep a small supply of useful items. Include things like:

-  Thermometer
-  Plasters
-  Liquid painkillers (eg paracetamol or ibuprofen)
-  Antiseptic cream
-  Sun cream
-  Antihistamine

# Children's medicines

## Not always needed for childhood illnesses

**Most illnesses get better by themselves and make your child stronger and able to resist similar illnesses in the future.**

Paracetamol and ibuprofen are often used to relieve the discomfort caused by a high temperature. Some children, for example those with asthma, may not be able to take ibuprofen, so check with your pharmacist, GP or school nurse.

Children don't often need antibiotics. Most childhood infections are caused by viruses. Antibiotics are medicines which kill bacteria. They work only against bacteria, not the viruses that cause the majority of sore throats, colds, sinus infections and bronchitis. For bacterial infections however, antibiotics work quickly and symptoms usually improve within 24-48 hours. Often children can feel completely better shortly after beginning the antibiotic course. To beat the bacterial infection, it is important that your child finishes the entire course as prescribed, even if your child seems better.

If you think your child is reacting badly to a medicine, stop giving it to them and speak to your GP or call **NHS 111**.

1

My child has a bad cold and I want to get some antibiotics from my GP.

2

Do not expect your GP to automatically give you antibiotics (or any other medicine).

3

Antibiotics aren't always the answer when your child is unwell.

### Antibiotics for children

If you're offered a prescription for an antibiotic, talk to your GP about why it is needed and how it will help. Ask about any possible side effects for example, whether it could make your child sleepy or irritable and other side effects like sickness and diarrhoea.

Repeated use and misuse of antibiotics are some of the main causes of the increase in resistant bacteria. Antibiotics are now no longer routinely used to treat chest infections, ear infections in children and sore throats.

If your child is prescribed antibiotics always finish the whole course to make sure all the bacteria are killed off. Your child may seem better after two or three days, but if the course is five days, they must carry on taking the medicine. The illness is more likely to return if your child does not finish all the antibiotics.





# A day off school?

## It can be hard deciding when to keep them off school

Not every illness should mean you need to keep your child from school. Be sure to inform the school on the first day of their absence. If your child is ill, it's likely to be due to one of a few minor health conditions, which you can often treat at home. You know your child best, and whether or not they are too ill to attend school.

### Common conditions

- **Coughs & colds** - with a minor cough or cold they may attend school. If they have a raised temperature, shivers or drowsiness, they should stay off school and see a GP. If your child has a more severe and long-lasting cough, see your GP.
- **Raised temperature** - with a raised temperature, they shouldn't attend school. They can return 24 hours after they start to feel better.
- **Rashes** - can be the first sign of many infectious illnesses, such as chickenpox and measles. If your child has a rash, check with your GP or practice nurse before sending them to school.
- **Headache** - a child with a minor headache doesn't usually need to be kept off school. If the headache is severe or is accompanied by other symptoms, such as raised temperature or drowsiness, then keep the child off school and see your GP.
- **Vomiting and diarrhoea** - children with diarrhoea and/or vomiting should definitely be kept off school until at least 48 hours after their symptoms have gone. Most cases of diarrhoea and vomiting in children get better without treatment, but if symptoms persist, see your GP.
- **Sore throat** - a sore throat alone doesn't have to keep a child from school. If accompanied by a raised temperature, your child should stay at home.
- **Chickenpox** - if your child has chickenpox, keep them off school until all their spots have crusted over.



### School nurse says

#### Ask yourself the following questions:

- Is my child well enough to do the activities of the school day? **If not, keep your child at home.**
- Does my child have a condition that could be passed on to other children or school staff? **If so, keep your child at home.**
- Would I take a day off work if I had this condition? **If so, keep your child at home.**

Source: [www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Yourchildatschool](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Yourchildatschool)



 Call 0300 123 1044 or visit [www.nhs.uk/smokefree](http://www.nhs.uk/smokefree)

### Asthma nurse says

The most important part of managing asthma is for you and your child to know about asthma and what triggers an attack. GP Asthma Clinics offer advice and treatment. Ask about the seasonal flu vaccine.

### Symptoms of severe asthma

Symptoms include repeated coughing and wheezing, shortness of breath and bringing up phlegm. Symptoms often get worse at night. **Call 999 to seek immediate medical assistance if your child has severe symptoms of asthma.**

# Asthma

## Know the symptoms

Asthma is a common long-term condition that can be well controlled in most children. The severity of asthma symptoms varies between children, from very mild to more severe. Asthma has multiple causes and it is not uncommon for two or more different causes to be present in one child. Asthma is more than wheezing. Coughing, recurrent bronchitis and shortness of breath, especially when exercising, are also ways that asthma appears.

The two most common triggers of asthma in children are colds and allergies. After infancy allergies become particularly important and avoiding the allergens to which your child is allergic may help improve their asthma.

Make sure you know how to use your child's inhaler properly by attending the yearly review with your GP practice. This can help prevent worsening or potential asthma attacks. A sudden, severe onset of symptoms is known as an asthma attack, it can be life-threatening and may require immediate hospital treatment, please seek immediate medical attention.

Parents should avoid smoking indoors or near to their children.

- 1 My child seems to wheeze and cough a lot, it seems to get worse at night.
- 2 Have you tried reducing any possible amounts of dust around the home? Do you smoke?
- 3 If symptoms persist see your GP. If your child has a serious asthma attack **call 999.**

Source: Department of Health, [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### GP says

Your GP will normally be able to diagnose asthma by asking about your child's symptoms, examining their chest and listening to their breathing.

Parents should regularly attend their local Asthma Clinic and get regular support on better management of their child's asthma at home. This will save unnecessary trips to hospital. All children with asthma who require continuous or repeated use of a steroid preventer inhaler or oral steroid are offered the seasonal flu vaccine. In addition, any child who has been admitted to hospital with a lower respiratory tract infection should also be offered the seasonal flu vaccine.



- 1** My child keeps coughing and sneezing, has a mild temperature and seems generally unwell.
- 2** Have they recently started school? Catching colds is very common. Have you spoken to your pharmacist about **sugar-free** paracetamol and cough medicines?
- 3** If symptoms last for more than 10 days or your child is coughing up yellow 'goo' they may have a bacterial infection. Contact your GP.

**Don't pass it on:**

**Catch it** Germs spread easily. Always carry tissues and use them to catch coughs or sneezes.

**Bin it** Germs can live for several hours on tissues. Dispose of your tissue as soon as possible.

**Kill it** Hands can pass on germs to everything you touch. Wash your hands with soap as soon as you can.

# Coughs, colds & flu

## Not usually serious

You will probably find when your child starts mixing with other children they get lots of coughs, colds and sniffles. There are some good things about this though as it helps the body build up a natural immune system.

Flu can be more serious than a cold and leave your child feeling quite unwell. Flu tends to come on more suddenly and severely than a cold. Your child may have aching limbs and feel uncomfortable, and be ill for a week or more.

Most viruses will run their course without doing any real harm because they will get better on their own. An annual nasal spray flu vaccine is available from the age of two as part of the NHS Childhood Vaccination Programme. Ask your GP or pharmacist for details.

### Things you can do at home to help:

- ✓ Give your child lots to drink.
- ✓ Try **sugar-free** paracetamol or ibuprofen (not aspirin) (see page 6).
- ✓ Keep them away from smoke and anyone who smokes.
- ✓ Talk to your pharmacist but remember that coughing is the body's way of keeping the lungs clear.
- ✓ Make sure they get plenty of sleep/rest.

### Contact your GP if:

- ✓ Your child has a persistent temperature of **39°C** or more.
- ✓ They have a fever with a rash.
- ✓ They are drowsy and less interactive.
- ✓ Your child is finding it hard to breathe.
- ✓ Persistent temperature does not respond to medicine.

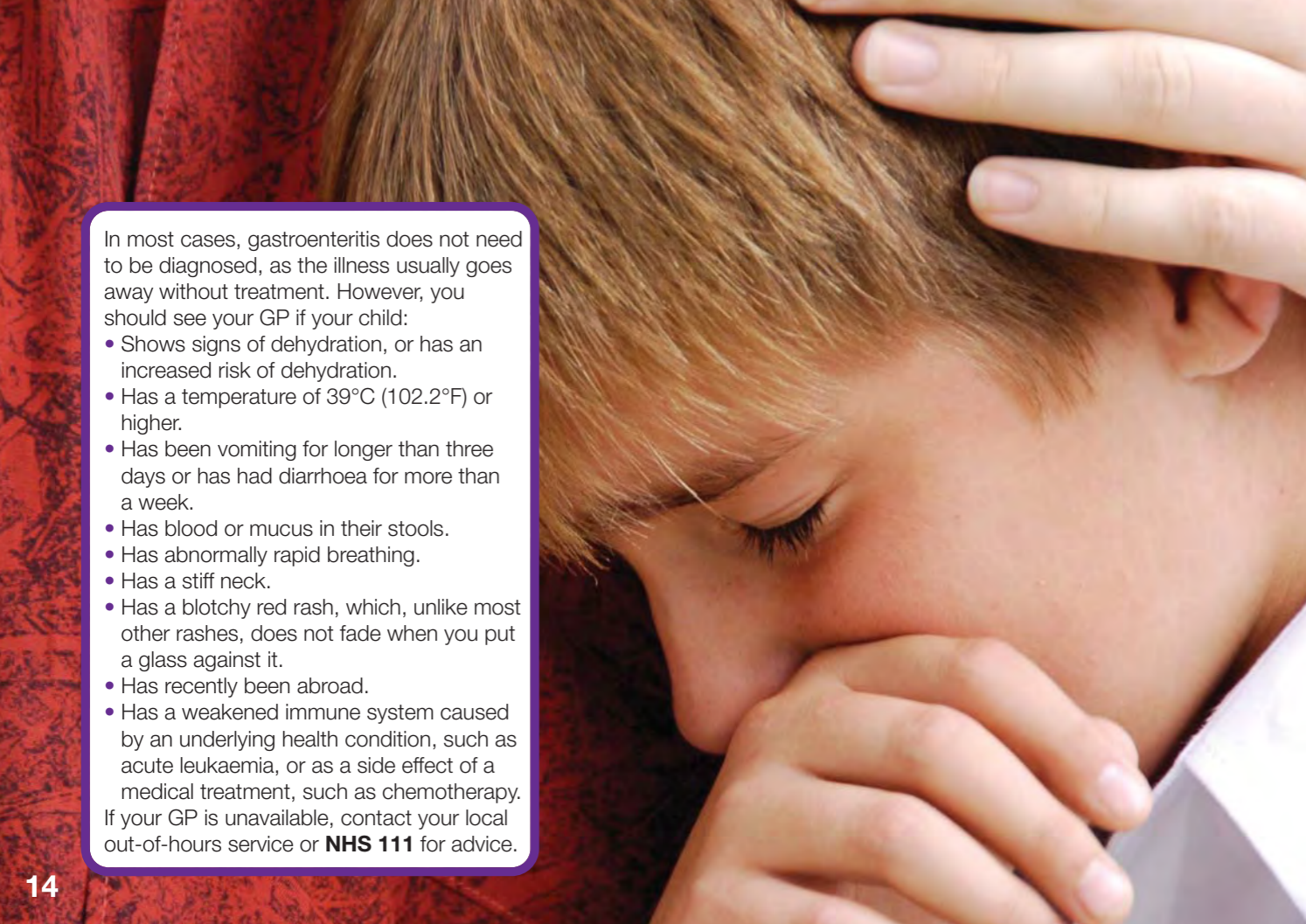


**Pharmacist says**

Children can be treated using over the counter medicines to bring down a raised temperature if it is causing distress. **Sugar-free** paracetamol or ibuprofen liquid can help. Check the label carefully. If in doubt, check with the pharmacist and tell them how old your child is. Flu symptoms are more severe and you may need to see your GP.



Source: 2013 NICE guidance.



In most cases, gastroenteritis does not need to be diagnosed, as the illness usually goes away without treatment. However, you should see your GP if your child:

- Shows signs of dehydration, or has an increased risk of dehydration.
- Has a temperature of 39°C (102.2°F) or higher.
- Has been vomiting for longer than three days or has had diarrhoea for more than a week.
- Has blood or mucus in their stools.
- Has abnormally rapid breathing.
- Has a stiff neck.
- Has a blotchy red rash, which, unlike most other rashes, does not fade when you put a glass against it.
- Has recently been abroad.
- Has a weakened immune system caused by an underlying health condition, such as acute leukaemia, or as a side effect of a medical treatment, such as chemotherapy.

If your GP is unavailable, contact your local out-of-hours service or **NHS 111** for advice.

# Diarrhoea & vomiting

## A common condition

Gastroenteritis is a common condition where the stomach and bowel become inflamed. It is usually caused by a viral or bacterial infection.

The two main symptoms of gastroenteritis are diarrhoea and vomiting. The vomiting will usually stop within one to three days, and the diarrhoea will usually pass within five to seven days, although it can last up to two weeks in some children. Your child may also have some additional symptoms caused by the infection, such as a high temperature (fever) and a tummy ache.

The most common cause of gastroenteritis in children is a virus called the rotavirus. This virus is passed out in the stools (faeces) of someone with the infection. It can be transferred to food, objects and surfaces if the infected person doesn't wash their hands after going to the toilet.

The infection is usually then passed to someone else when they either eat contaminated food or touch a contaminated object or surface and then touch their mouth.

Children with diarrhoea and/or vomiting should be kept off school until at least 48 hours after their symptoms have gone. Most cases of diarrhoea and vomiting in children get better without treatment, but if symptoms persist, consult your GP.

1

My child has been sick a few times.

2

Do I need to keep him off school?

3

Yes, for 48 hours after symptoms are gone.



## GP says

Most cases of gastroenteritis in children are mild and pass within five to seven days without any specific treatment. Make sure they drink plenty of fluids, get enough rest, and are careful with hand washing. If your child is eating solids, encourage them to eat as soon as their vomiting is under control. Simple foods that are high in carbohydrates - such as bread, rice or pasta - are usually recommended. Drinking fruit juice or fizzy drinks is not recommended, as it can also make diarrhoea worse.





# Sleeping & bedwetting

## Quality sleep is essential for growth and development

Children aged six to 12 sleep for around 10 hours a night. Those that get less sleep than they need can suffer from weight gain, depression, poor concentration, reduced creative ability and lower immunity to diseases. If they have sleeping difficulties, they tend to have problems more akin to adults such as worries often to do with school, friends or family. Nightmares are more unusual by this age.

Try to remember the importance you put into sleep routines when they were a baby, it is as important now as ever.

### Bedwetting and continence problems

The frustration and extra work involved in managing this can put a strain on family life. Bedwetting occurs most nights in 15% of five-year-olds and is still a problem for 3% of all 15 year-olds. It can be viewed as a taboo subject, the real figures for older children could be much higher. It's significant that night-time 'nappies' are widely available in sizes to fit children up to 15 years old.

There are many different strategies recommended to help parents deal with their child's bedwetting. Some work for some families but not for others and there seems to be no definitive cure. Wet beds aren't just an inconvenience, when an older child is still wetting at night it rules out fun experiences like school trips and sleepovers and can lead to embarrassment and fears about bullying. Talk to your school nurse or GP.

1

My child frequently wets the bed and is upset.

2

Don't tell them off or punish them.

3

Speak to your GP about measures that could help.



### Sleep tips

- Remove distractions such as TVs, mobiles and other devices.
- Make sure they have a comfortable bed, a night light if they wish and a quiet space.
- Make sure curtains do not let in too much light.
- Keep to a regular routine.
- Encourage regular exercise.
- Try to finish the family meal a couple of hours before bedtime.
- Try to complete any homework before dinner to allow for some relaxation time.

### Family Lives

Offers support and advice, you can talk to a Family Support Worker by calling their confidential helpline on 0808 800 2222. You can also share experiences and advice with other parents at Forums.

### ERIC - The Children's Continence Charity

The ERIC Helpline is available weekdays on 0845 370 8008 (10am-4pm)  
A range of free to download leaflets is available on the ERIC website as well as a wide range of products to purchase such as bed alarms and bed protection to help with the everyday problems of a child who has wetting or soiling problems. [www.eric.org.uk](http://www.eric.org.uk)



## Sports injury

Playing sport and doing regular exercise is good for your health, but can sometimes result in injury. Half of activity-related accidents in the home involving children under 14 are caused by trampolining, study of hospital admissions shows.

**Use of protective equipment:** Can be effective in reducing injury but is dependent on the sport played. This includes helmets (e.g. in cycling, cricket and skiing), ankle braces, mouthguards (e.g. in football, rugby and basketball), wrist and elbow guards (e.g. in skiing), and eye goggles (e.g. in lacrosse).

**Changing rules of play:** Modifying rules of play to prohibit aggressive or dangerous behaviour has been associated with a decrease in reported sporting injuries (e.g. in rugby or American football where they have been associated with reductions in spinal cord injuries).

**Supervised play:** Make sure your child attends supervised sessions with trained trainers.

# Bumps & bruises

## Part of growing up

It is almost impossible to prevent every accident, although there are things we can do at home which might help. Minor cuts, bumps and bruises are a normal part of growing up. Allowing your child to explore the world around them (with supervision) helps them develop and learn. Most of your child's bumps will require no more than a cuddle or a plaster to make them better. You will quickly be able to tell by the noise of the bang, the reaction of your child and the colour of the area affected, which are the more serious bumps. If your child has unexplained bruising or injury, you need to find out how this happened.

If it looks like the bump may swell, use a cold flannel (soaking the cloth with cold water) or ice pack (but don't put ice directly onto the skin) to help reduce swelling and to cool the area for at least a few minutes.

**If your child has had a bump to the head and it looks serious or symptoms worsen, call your GP. Read the information on the right.** ➡

1

After a fall, comfort your child, check for injuries, treat bumps and bruises.

2

Give your child some **sugar-free** paracetamol and let them rest whilst watching them closely.

3

Seek immediate help if they:

- Have seriously injured themselves.
- Are unconscious.
- Have difficulty breathing.
- Are having a seizure.

## Head injury

One of the signs of a severe head injury is being unusually sleepy, this does not mean you cannot let your child sleep.

**You need to get medical attention if:**

- **They are vomiting persistently (more than three times).**
- **They are complaining it hurts.**
- **They are not responding at all.**
- **Pain is not relieved by sugar-free paracetamol or ibuprofen.**

If your child is tired from what's happened, or from crying, then it is fine to let them sleep. **If you are worried in any way about their drowsiness, then you should wake your child an hour after they go to sleep.** Check they are okay and responding normally throughout the night.



### Protecting children in the pub

If you are taking your child somewhere where there is alcohol, remember that the more you drink the harder it will be to look after them. They can wander off or receive unwanted attention from strangers. It is important to know about any risks there are for children in pubs, as well as other licensed premises, which means anywhere that supplies alcohol or entertainment. For example, restaurants where you are eating a meal and places like nightclubs where you might take your children for an event like a wedding reception or family party. Children have a right to be protected from harm - not just physical but emotional and moral. It is up to everyone to do what they can to protect them.

### Play is important

It is very important that children are allowed to get muddy sometimes, shout and scream and feel free. It is easy to be over protective. Balance is the key. Give them a bit of independence as they grow, as long as they are safe.

# Accidents & safety

## In and out of the home

Most accidents happen in the home which is why it is important to ensure that your home is a safe place for all your family, especially for young children. One of the highest reported incidents of accidents at home is children being scalded by hot tea. Make your home as child friendly as you can.

Make sure that all medicines, drugs and cleaning chemicals are locked away out of reach. Certain places are full of danger, such as kitchens, sheds and even garden ponds. Make sure TV screens are securely fixed to walls. Hair straighteners, dishwasher tablets being mistaken for sweets and hot drinks are all possible household hazards. An accident only takes seconds.

Make your child aware of the dangers of roads and railways. Always use an appropriate car safety seat for their age and height. Outside the home they should never be alone. Teach them to run, yell and tell if approached by a stranger. Make sure you always know where they are and if they are at a friend's house, make sure you have a contact number.

Sleepovers - discuss with your child's friend's parents who will be there and seek assurances that they will be supervised. Do not be embarrassed to ask.

1

My son is eight and wants to sleep over at a friend's house.

2

Discuss with your son's friend's parents and find out what they will be doing and who will be at home.

3

Make sure you feel comfortable and that you exchange contact details.

### Tips

- All children love to explore. Even though they may be a little older it is important that they can play in a safe place where you, or another trusted adult can see or hear them.
- Children under 11 should never be left alone at home, especially with pets, even trained, good-natured animals can be tested.
  - If your child wants to go and play at a friend's house, chat to their parent, make sure you have a contact number and arrange to collect them.

## How it affects families

Involving and **supporting all the family** is very important. Family members fear the child may hit out at them and feel embarrassed or even ashamed about how they act.

Behavioural problems can cause a lot of distress to children, their siblings, families and local communities.

As a parent, it can be easy to ignore your child when they are being good and only pay attention to them when they are behaving badly. Over time, the child learns that they only get attention when they are breaking the rules. Parents can get over sensitive and stressed, even when they are just acting like any other child.

Parenting programmes can advise you on how to access the support you need, and share experiences with others who are facing similar problems with their own children. These groups can offer training in helping you encourage positive behaviour in your child.



# Serious behavioural difficulties

## Persistent and severe

All children test the limits you set and try to cross boundaries some of the time. This is all part of growing up, learning and becoming an independent person.

In a small minority of children behavioural problems become persistent and severe, such as when a child gets stuck in a pattern of challenging behaviour, they often feel unhappy, unsafe and out of control (and so do their parents). Characterised by repeated and persistent bad behaviour much worse than would normally be expected in a child of that age. This can occur in children of all ages but more often starts in early life, with it being more common in boys than girls.

Signs of behavioural problems can present in many ways from aggression, refusing to speak and tics to repeated head banging. You know your child best. If you are worried, discuss with your school nurse or GP. Some children may need to be referred to a specialist where they can get the help they need.

Don't feel you have to cope alone. Talk to your school nurse or GP, ask about support groups and local parenting programmes. Parents of children with behavioural problems need help and support too, don't be afraid to ask.

1

My child's bad behaviour seems to go far beyond that of their school friends.

2

They are aggressive and hit out. They always play alone, other kids keep out of their way.

3

Talk to your school nurse. There is lots of support and help available.

## Conduct disorder

Sometimes, a child's behaviour can affect their development and interfere with their ability to live a 'normal' life. When behaviour is such a problem, it is called a conduct disorder.

### Signs to look out for:

- Aggression to people and animals (pets).
- Destruction of property and breaking things.
- Never doing as asked, ignoring all rules and instructions.
- Being distant and secretive.

Source:

[www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk)  
[www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg158](http://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg158)



# Mental health & well-being

## A solid foundation for their future well-being

Parents play a vital role in supporting children's mental and emotional health and in building their confidence and resilience. It can be tough growing up, with children having to cope with many different situations and unfamiliar challenges like school, relationships and pressures of growing up. Many children find it hard to talk to their parents about the things which are worrying them. They might express how they feel through being moody, getting in trouble at school or at home or by becoming angry easily.

**Many thousands of children and young people go through periods of mental ill health.** When this happens to them, it can be impossible for them to make and keep friends, manage at school and feel good about themselves. It can be confusing for their parents and siblings. Many other children may not be diagnosed as having mental health problems but lack confidence and feel unhappy much of the time.

If your child is having difficulties, try to pick a time when the house is quiet and you can spend some time listening to your child and how they feel. Take them seriously and offer help and support if you can. More rarely, a child may experience difficulties that are more severe or long lasting and their feelings or mood may be so extreme or upsetting that they need professional help. If they are self-harming, running away, experiencing eating difficulties or extreme behavioural issues then you need immediate support. Talk to your GP.

1

My son suddenly hates school and refuses to go.

2

Have you asked him about bullying or if anything else has changed in his life?

3

Talk to your school in the first instance.

## Facts about children and mental health

- One in 10 children and young people aged 5-16 has a diagnosable mental health disorder.
- Children who live in poverty or poor housing are more likely to have mental health problems.
- Children whose parents have mental health problems often need special help themselves to cope and enjoy their childhood.
- It is thought that in the UK 1 in 15 children and young people has self-harmed.

Source: Barnados.org.uk 2016

Long-term abuse is much more likely to cause problems for a child or young person as they get older. The longer children are exposed to violence, the more severe the effects on them are. These can include a lack of respect for the non-violent parent, loss of self-confidence (which will affect their ability to form relationships in the future), being over-protective of a parent, loss of childhood, problems at school and running away.

### If you are the victim

Many people find it difficult to understand why people stay in abusive situations. Fear, love, the risk of homelessness and money worries can make it difficult for women with children to leave. If you are a victim of domestic abuse, you are not the only victim - your children are too. You can report domestic abuse to any professional. There are many agencies who will help you to access support from a range of specialist services.

Even if you think an incident is just a one-off, other professional agencies may already have concerns. So your information could be very important.



# Domestic abuse

## Keeping your child safe

You are not responsible for your abuser's behaviour. You or your child do not deserve to experience any form of abuse. Your abuser may blame you and other things like being drunk, pressure of work, unemployment and minimise or deny what they are doing. You may have tried changing what you do, say and wear to try to pacify and not to antagonise the situation. Violence rarely happens only once and will get more and more serious as time goes on. You need to make sure you and your child are safe. It's not easy to accept that a loved one can act in this way and you may be trying to make the relationship work.

Domestic abuse can affect children in many ways. They may feel frightened, become withdrawn, aggressive or difficult, start bedwetting, run away, have problems at school, lack concentration and suffer emotional upset. Domestic abuse places children at risk of significant harm and professional support is needed. It is best that action is taken early to stop things getting worse. Keeping your child safe is your responsibility. Children can often get caught up in the crossfire and become victims.

Children need time to discuss the feelings they have about violence or abuse. Children need to know that it is not their fault and that this is not the way relationships should be.

1

I am being abused and it is affecting my child but if I contact someone it may get worse.

2

Don't keep what is happening secret, you have nothing to be ashamed of. The longer abuse goes on the harder it gets to take some action.

3

Don't suffer alone, get help by talking to someone you trust or contact one of the organisations listed. Be a survivor - not a victim.

## What is domestic abuse?

Abuse can take many forms:

- Physical including sexual violence.
- Mental and verbal cruelty.
- Financial control.
- Controlling behaviour.

## The facts

Domestic abuse affects a number of families. Women are at increased risk of domestic abuse during pregnancy and the first year after giving birth, even if there has not been any abuse before. Children do hear, they do see and they are aware of violence at home, even if you think they do not. Children react in different ways to violence and research suggests that they are more likely to become abusers or victims later in life.



### Signs of stress

It is important that you know and recognise the signs of stress. This way you can support your child and get extra help if you need to.

Signs can include:

- Mood swings.
- Being unable to sleep.
- Trouble concentrating on schoolwork.
- Sudden stomach aches or headaches and wanting to stay away from school.
- Overreacting and being emotional.
- Unexplained injuries - could they be being bullied or are they self-harming?

# Stress & anxiety

## Helping them cope

Children of all ages can get stressed and anxious. They can feel stressed for many reasons but the most common reasons are parental divorce, pressure at school and being bullied or abused. Be careful what you say, even when you do not think your child is listening to you. Children overhear parents talking about money worries or problems they are having at work and they start to feel anxious about these things themselves and take on worries beyond their years.

Many children feel under pressure to do things they are not happy about because of peer pressure. Friendships are very important and children often suffer stress if they have fallen out with a friend. Could they be being bullied?

Children can suffer from stress and anxiety due to high expectations from parents and family. Let them know that as long as they are doing their best that is okay. Support them in getting extra help if they need it. Let them know you are there for them and that they can talk to you if they are worried. Mental health issues and depression can affect children. If you have concerns speak out.

1

Your child is irritable, secretive and finds it difficult to sleep.

2

Have they fallen out with a friend? Are they being bullied? Pick a good time to chat.

3

Talk to their teacher and ask about friendship groups. If you are still worried speak to your GP.



### Relieving stress

There are lots of ways you can help your child overcome or cope with stress and anxiety:

- Talk to your child about what is causing their stress.
- Tell them it is normal to feel stressed now and again.
- Help them learn to relax and cope better when they are upset.
- Do not put extra pressure on your child by expecting too much from them.
- If their anxiety goes on for longer than a month, let them know you will support them in getting help.



# Growing up & puberty

## Changing times

Growing up can be a challenging time for all and a bit of love and understanding can go a long way. Let them know you are there to support them. Sometimes it can come as a bit of a shock when your child starts to develop and change. Of course, you are still their parent and they still need you. Be there to support them and try to think back to how you felt at their age.

Discussing matters such as friendships, relationships and growing up are important. Be open-minded and do not judge them, so they feel they can trust you and turn to you when they need help and support. Look online together at suitable sites such as [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) this will help you both have the opportunity to chat without embarrassment.

Friendships are very important to children. Having a close friend or group of friends and belonging to a group helps them feel good about themselves, learn to deal with people and develop their own identity.

You can show them how to trust their own feelings and values, building up an emotional strength that will help them as they get older.

1

He keeps asking me awkward questions about sex, I am not sure what to say.

2

The more they understand about growing up, the less confused they will be.

3

Find out, maybe you could go online. Do not be embarrassed, let them know they can ask you anything.

### Boys

Boys' bodies can start to change from around the age of nine or ten with sexual development soon after. Your son will be developing into a young man. He will need your support and trust but he will also need some privacy, respect and encouragement.



### Girls

Puberty in girls can begin from around the age of nine. Your daughter will probably be going through puberty and developing into a young woman. She will need your support and trust but she will also need some privacy, respect and encouragement.

All children develop at their own pace.





# Transition & change

## The 'tween years'

For most parents, their children grow up too fast. They are facing the pressures of everyday life in our competitive world, they are approaching puberty with all the huge hormonal changes that brings, as well as physical and mental challenges and stress of school work and exams. Along with this, you will both be thinking about senior school.

The pre-teens are an unsettled time and your child will often be more self-conscious and sometimes care more about what their friends think than what you think. This is sometimes known as the 'tween years'. They have a growing confidence in themselves but they still need your support and protection. Provide suitable limits, with some flexibility, for them to explore and experiment with situations safely. It is a time when they can be most vulnerable and also trusting and do not understand many of the potential dangers. As parents it is important to keep a balance, so they stay safe, but are allowed a little more freedom. Mobile phones help tweens develop closer bonds with their peers and, as a result, they push away from their parents at an earlier age. Friends are very important at this age.

Make time to talk to your child and think about how you communicate. Try to avoid constantly nagging or you run the risk of your child 'tuning out' permanently. Your pre-teen is looking for their own identity, try to be an advisor but set clear boundaries if certain behaviour during the transition from 'tween' to teenager is becoming a major concern. The main thing is to pick your battles, and let some go.

- 1 One minute he acts like a little boy and the next he's a stropky, rude 'tweenager'.
- 2 He may be feeling a bit lost and unable to cope with the changes he is going through.
- 3 Try to take some time out with him, where he can talk to you in confidence.

## Moving on

When your child starts senior school, it's a big change for them. They're used to being the oldest in their school - soon they'll be the youngest. Everything will be brand new and much bigger. They'll have more books, more teachers and more homework. Moving school can be scary but exciting too, so give your child lots of support. Make sure they know what's happening and make your decisions together. Visiting the school with your child to meet their teachers before they start can help. Find out who else is going to their new school - can you go together on the first day?



## Recognising eating problems

It can be hard for parents to know if a child has an eating problem or disorder. Look for some of the signs of difficulty which need to be taken seriously:

- Regularly skipping meals and obsessively counting calories.
- Eating only low calorie or slimming food.
- Showing a keen interest in buying or cooking food for others.
- Hiding their body.
- An obsession with exercise.
- Dramatic weight loss or gain.
- Disappearing from the table directly after meals (in order to make themselves vomit).
- Saying they are unhappy with their body.
- Food missing in large amounts from the kitchen.

Despite these signs, many children may deny they have a problem. They may try to keep it a secret and find it difficult to accept they need help.

# Eating disorders

## Serious health conditions

Children's appetites may change at different ages and this is normal. Some children eat a lot or eat anything, others are more particular. Worries about weight, shape and eating are common, especially among young girls.

Eating disorders generally involve self-critical, negative thoughts and feelings about weight and food. More children under the age of twelve diet and are developing eating disorders. Anorexia nervosa and compulsive eating are the most common.

Celebrity culture which glorifies size zero figures, leaves an increasing number of young girls struggling to cope with their growing bodies. Children diagnosed with an eating disorder often have a history of early feeding problems.

Many children who develop an eating disorder have low self-esteem and their focus on weight can be an attempt to gain a sense of control at a time when their lives feel increasingly out of control. Eating disorders affect many more girls than boys, but boys do suffer from them too.

If you are worried about your child contact your GP or school nurse. The sooner a child gets help, the better their chances of a quick recovery. If you suspect something is wrong, talk to your child. Choose a good time, avoid mealtimes and interruptions from others and stay calm. With the right treatment and the right support, disorders can be beaten.

1

My daughter is nine and wants to be skinny.

2

Tell her this isn't a good look and explain to her that you love her as she is.

3

If you are really worried, and she's losing weight, discuss with your school nurse.

## Anorexia and bulimia

These are serious mental health conditions that need professional help to diagnose and treat. Both are eating disorders and can lead to other physical and emotional problems. People with anorexia nervosa have an extreme fear of gaining weight and may starve themselves by only eating tiny quantities of food. A girl's periods may stop or never even start. They become preoccupied with their weight and shape and the weight of their friends and peers.

People with bulimia nervosa eat large amounts of food in binges and then make themselves sick to get rid of the food. They may not look overweight or underweight, and because of this their eating problems are often difficult to detect and children can become good at hiding this. Talk to your GP.



### Threadworms

Threadworms are tiny parasitic worms that hatch eggs in and infect the large intestine of humans. They are the most common type of worm infection in the UK and are particularly common in young children under the age of 10.

Threadworms are white and look like small pieces of thread. You may notice them around your child's bottom or in your child's faeces (poo). They don't always cause symptoms, but may cause itchiness or signs of scratching around their bottom. This can be worse at night and can sometimes disturb sleep.

#### When to see your GP

If you think you or your child may have threadworms, you can usually treat the infection yourself with medication available at pharmacies without prescription. You only need to speak to your GP if you are pregnant as the usual medication is not suitable.

# Head lice & threadworms

## A common problem

Head lice are tiny wingless insects that are grey-brown in colour. They are the size of a pinhead when they hatch and 3mm long (the size of a sesame seed) when fully grown. Head lice cannot fly, jump or swim. They are spread by head-to-head contact and climb from the hair of an infected person to the hair of someone else. Head lice are **not** the result of dirty hair or poor hygiene. Children are often affected by head lice because they tend to have more head-to-head contact while at school or during play. Head lice are most common in children between 4 to 11 years old.

#### Getting rid of head lice:

The main treatments are wet-combing or lotions and sprays. If a treatment doesn't work the first time, you can try it again, try a different treatment, or get advice from your school nurse, health visitor, pharmacist or GP.

The wet-combing method involves removing the head lice by systematically combing the hair, from the scalp towards the ends, using a special fine-toothed comb with a spacing of less than 0.3mm. Your pharmacist can advise you on which combs are suitable. No medicated products are necessary for wet-combing.

Medicated lotion or spray is an alternative method for treating head lice. However, no medicated treatment is 100% effective. Some treatments need to be done again to make sure newly hatched lice are killed.



### Pharmacist's tips

Your pharmacist can recommend an over-the-counter lotion or spray. Medicated treatments should only be used if a living (moving) head louse is found. Conditioners and shampoos are not thought to be effective and are therefore not recommended. Make sure that you have enough lotion to treat everyone in your family who is actually affected by head lice.



# Smoking

## Secondhand smoke is dangerous for everyone

Secondhand smoke is made up of two types of smoke: mainstream (breathed in and out by smokers) and sidestream (smoke from the burning tip of a cigarette).

Secondhand smoke is especially dangerous for children as they are growing up because:

- Passive smoking can cause serious respiratory illnesses, such as bronchitis and pneumonia.
- Exposure to secondhand smoke increases the risk of developing asthma and can cause asthma attacks.
- Those who are exposed to secondhand smoke are much more likely to contract a serious respiratory infection.
- There is an increased risk of meningitis for children who are exposed to secondhand smoke.
- Those exposed to secondhand smoke are more likely to get coughs and colds, as well as middle ear disease, which can cause deafness.

'Third-hand smoke' that lingers on things such as clothes, furnishings and carpet can be as dangerous to children as secondhand smoke.

### Protecting your child

Keep them away from all cigarettes and smoky places (a room where even one person is smoking). Smoking in the house, even with the door or a window open will not stop smoke drifting into other rooms and lingering for a long time.

- Keep living, sleeping and eating areas smokefree.
- Make your car a smokefree zone.
- Ask other people not to smoke around your child.
- Avoid smoking anywhere around your children. If you smoke go outside and take 7 steps away from the door.

# Useful national contacts

## Allergy UK

01322 619 898  
[www.allergyuk.org](http://www.allergyuk.org)

## Asthma UK

0300 222 5800  
[www.asthma.org.uk](http://www.asthma.org.uk)

## Caroline Walker Trust

Download publications about healthy eating and nutrition.  
[www.cwt.org.uk/publications](http://www.cwt.org.uk/publications)

**Change4Life** Healthy tips  
[www.nhs.uk/change4life](http://www.nhs.uk/change4life)

## Child Accident Prevention Trust

020 7608 3828  
[www.capt.org.uk](http://www.capt.org.uk)

## Dental Helpline

0845 063 1188

## Diabetes UK

[www.diabetes.org.uk](http://www.diabetes.org.uk)

## Family Lives

0808 800 2222  
[www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)

## Institute of Health Visiting

[www.ihv.org.uk/families/top-tips](http://www.ihv.org.uk/families/top-tips)

## Meningitis Now

0808 80 10 388  
[www.meningitisnow.org](http://www.meningitisnow.org)

## National Domestic Violence Helpline

0808 2000 247  
[www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk](http://www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk)

## National At-home Dad Network

Dad's views, chat, news and support.  
[www.athomedad.org](http://www.athomedad.org)

## Netmums

Parenting advice and information.  
[www.netmums.com](http://www.netmums.com)

## NHS Choices

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

## Red Cross

Information on CPR (kiss of life)  
[www.redcrossfirstaidtraining.co.uk](http://www.redcrossfirstaidtraining.co.uk)

## To find an NHS dentist

Call **NHS 111** or visit [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)



Call 0300 123 1044 or visit  
[www.nhs.uk/smokefree](http://www.nhs.uk/smokefree)

## NHS 111

If you think you need help urgently during the day or night you should call **NHS 111** before you go to any other health service. By calling **NHS 111** you will be directed straight away to the local service that can help you best. It is free to call, including from a mobile, and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

When should I call **NHS 111**?

- When you need help fast but it's not life-threatening.
- When you think you need to go to A&E or another NHS urgent care service.
- When it's outside of your GP's surgery hours.
- When you do not know who to call for medical help.
- If you do not have a local GP to call.

**Call 999 in an emergency**

# Useful local contacts

## Torbay School Nurse Team

01803 219814  
[torbayschoolnurseteam@nhs.net](mailto:torbayschoolnurseteam@nhs.net)

## Torbay Hospital

01803 614567

## Torbay and South Devon NHS Foundation Trust

Including information on health visiting, children's learning disability team, healthy lifestyles, dental services, mental health, Torbay drug and alcohol services and smoking cessation.  
[www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk](http://www.torbayandsouthdevon.nhs.uk)

## The Orb

Torbay's new information and advice directory.  
[www.torbayorb.com](http://www.torbayorb.com)

## School Admissions

01803 208908  
[www.torbay.gov.uk/schooladmissions](http://www.torbay.gov.uk/schooladmissions)

## School Transport

[www.torbay.gov.uk/secondaryschools/transport](http://www.torbay.gov.uk/secondaryschools/transport)

## Torbay Young Carers

01803 208657  
[www.torbay.gov.uk/youngcarers](http://www.torbay.gov.uk/youngcarers)

## Torbay Special Educational Needs Team

Information for families with children or young people (0 to 25 years) who have special educational needs because of a learning difficulty or disability which require special educational provision to be made for them.  
[www.torbay.gov.uk/sen](http://www.torbay.gov.uk/sen)

## Children's Learning Disability Service

[www.torbay.gov.uk/lids](http://www.torbay.gov.uk/lids)

## Hearing Impairment Services - Children

[www.torbay.gov.uk/sen](http://www.torbay.gov.uk/sen)

## Integrated Youth Support Service

[www.torbay.gov.uk/iyss](http://www.torbay.gov.uk/iyss)

## YMCA Childcare

For 2-12 year olds, including holiday clubs.  
01803 551578  
[www.ymcasouthdevon.org.uk](http://www.ymcasouthdevon.org.uk)

## Torbay Council Children's Services

If you are worried that a child or young person is at risk of abuse, harm or neglect.  
01803 208100 (24 hour)

## Torbay Domestic Abuse Service

If you need someone to talk to about domestic abuse.  
01803 698869 (extension 2)  
[tdas@sanctuary-housing.co.uk](mailto:tdas@sanctuary-housing.co.uk)

## Lifestyles Team

Including smoking cessation.  
0300 456 1006 (local rate).