

How can I recognize my child's illnesses?

Illness

An allergy is a physical reaction to a substance in the environment. When a child comes into contact with one of these substances, known as an allergen, either by touching, breathing, or eating it, or having it injected, his body releases histamines to fight it.

Allergies
3 5 7 10 14 15

Chicken pox is an itchy rash that starts as small red bumps which quickly change into thin-walled water blisters on a pink base. The blisters then develop into clear fluid blips, which finally become dry brown crusts in about four days. Highly contagious through touch, sneezing, coughing or even breathing.

Chicken Pox
1 8 10

Asthma is a chronic condition in which a person's airways tend to become inflamed and fill with mucus when exposed to cigarette smoke, a known allergen, cold or exercise. The body reacts with coughing and wheezing.

Asthma
3 4

A cold is characterized by a stuffy or runny nose (thick, clear, white, yellow, or green mucus), a cough and sometimes a sore throat. Medicine will not cure the cold faster, but you can help your baby feel better and keep her from getting worse by giving her lots of rest and liquids (breast milk or formula only for babies under six months).

Cold
1 3 5 7 11 15 16

Coxsackie causes hand, foot and mouth syndrome and herpangina, with blister-like sores in mouth and throat and on feet and hands. Highly contagious, the virus spreads from mouth to mouth, feces to hand to mouth, or through sneezing or coughing, usually striking in the first two years of life.

Coxsackie
1 2 9 10 11

Croup is an infection in the upper respiratory tract that swells the trachea and larynx (windpipe and voice box). Children tend to develop a harsh, barking (like a seal) cough. Most cases of croup are caused by the parainfluenza virus (the adenovirus is another offender).

Croup
3 4

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) is the most common cause of lower respiratory tract infections in children worldwide. It is the leading cause of pneumonia and bronchiolitis in infants.

RSV
1 3 4 5 8 9 13

A child shouldn't go to child care if he has any of the following:

- Fever, irritability, lethargy, persistent crying or difficulty breathing
- An upper respiratory illness such as bronchitis or a bad cold
- A gastrointestinal illness, blood or mucus in the stools or vomiting
- Rash if it's linked to an infection
- Bacterial conjunctivitis (pinkeye) or yellow discharge from the eye
- Strep throat or mouth sores that cause excessive drooling
- Untreated head lice

Illnesses

Symptoms

Illnesses

1
Fever
Rectal temperature more than 100.4° F

2
Diarrhea

3
Cough

4
Breathing problems/wheezing

5
Congestion/stuffy nose

6
Ear pain

7
Runny Nose
Clear

8
Listlessness

9
Refuses food/liquid

10
Rash/purple spots or sore

11
Sore Throat

12
Nausea/vomiting

13
Crying or fussiness

14
Itchy/watery eyes

15
Sneezing

16
Mucus
Thick white, yellow or green

17
Fluid draining from ear
White or yellow

18
Gas

Ear Infection
1 6 9 13 17

An ear infection can result when fluid and bacteria build up in the area behind your baby's eardrum. When the eustachian tube is blocked (common during colds, sinus infections, even allergy season), the fluid gets trapped in the middle ear and bacteria growth causes the eardrum to bulge. Symptoms include pus draining from the ear, baby tugging at her ear, fever and irritability.

Stomach Flu
1 2 8 9 12

A stomach flu caused by a virus is one of the most common causes of vomiting and diarrhea in a toddler. Avoid spreading germs by insisting that everyone in the house wash their hands thoroughly after changing diapers or using the bathroom.

Pneumonia
1 3 4 9 16

Pneumonia is an infection of the lungs that can be caused by bacteria and viruses. The infected child may develop pneumonia after two or three days of having a cold or sore throat. Symptoms may include fever and unusually rapid breathing. The most common type begins suddenly and can be prevented by immunization.

Gastric Reflux
3 4 9 12

Gastric reflux disease is characterized by frequent stomach eruptions and vomiting. Reflux is exactly what it looks and sounds like—frequent uprisings of stomach fluid—and it makes for a cranky baby who won't eat much and, in the worst cases, wheezes, coughs and gags.

Whooping Cough
1 3 4

Whooping cough (also known as pertussis) is a rare bacterial infection that inflames the airways. The pertussis bacteria set up shop in the windpipe, where they bring on a persistent, violent cough. The coughing spell can last for 20 to 30 seconds. Whooping cough is rare and very serious and can be prevented by immunization.

Eczema
10

Eczema is an itchy skin rash that can appear on a baby's skin when the child is as young as two months old. It generally shows up on the forehead, cheeks, or scalp and sometimes spreads to the arms or chest. The rash often causes the skin to appear dry, thickened and scaly.

Colic
13 18

Colic is a term used to describe persistent crying (usually in the afternoon or evening) in an otherwise healthy baby. If your baby is under five months old and cries for more than three hours a day, more than three days a week for more than three weeks, and there is no medical explanation for the distress, chances are he's colicky.

ACTION ITEMS

When should I call the pediatrician?

You're the best judge of whether your baby is really ill, so call if you're worried, no matter what his temperature is. Besides, temperature isn't the only indication of whether his illness is serious. His age is a factor (fever is more serious in babies under three months), and so is his behavior (a high fever that doesn't stop him from playing and feeding normally may not be cause for alarm). Keep in mind that he'll feel hotter if he's been running around than if he's waking up from a nap.

With all this in mind, you should call the doctor if:

- 1** Your baby is younger than three months and has a rectal temperature of 100.4° F (38° C) or higher.
- 2** Your baby is three months or older and has a rectal temperature above 101° F (38.3° C).
- 3** You are worried—no matter what the time or temperature.

Symptoms to watch out for

Any of the following symptoms could indicate a more serious problem when coupled with a fever and should be treated by a physician. Page your pediatrician, call 911 or go to the emergency room immediately if:

- 1** Your baby has lost her appetite, has little energy or is noticeably pale; or you notice other changes in her behavior and appearance.
- 2** Your baby has small, purple-red spots on his skin that don't turn white when you press on them or large purple blotches; both of these can signal meningitis, an infection of the brain.
- 3** Your baby has difficulty breathing even after you clear her nose with a bulb syringe.
- 4** Your baby seems delirious, glassy-eyed, or extremely cranky or irritable; these could signal a serious viral or bacterial illness.