

King St & University Medical Practice

Self-Help Booklet

Introduction

This booklet will help you to know:

- When you can treat yourself and save the doctor valuable time to help people who are more seriously ill
- When you really need to see the doctor

Before you call a doctor what can you do:

- Try the appropriate treatments recommended in this booklet
- Think about how you feel
 - Can you wait to see your doctor in normal surgery hours?
 - Do you need advice or reassurance now?
 - Do you need a doctor to see you now?
- Think about whether anyone else can help you, such as a pharmacist or dentist.

In a real emergency you can be sure that a doctor will always be available to give you advice over the phone or to see you

Sore Throats

Most sore throats are caused by a virus infection which antibiotics cannot cure. The sore throat will usually disappear in a few days.

What you can do:

- To help relieve the pain on swallowing and if there is a temperature, take regular painkillers, such as paracetamol
- Drink plenty of cold drinks

ASPIRIN MUST NOT BE GIVEN TO CHILDREN UNDER 12 YEARS OF AGE

Contact your doctor if:

- You have severe problems swallowing
- You have severe breathing difficulties
- The problem lasts for more than three days
- You also have severe earache
- Your temperature rises above 38.6°C or 101°F

Coughs

Contact your doctor if:

- The coughing produces blood
- If breathing is accompanied by a pain in the chest, or shortness of breath
- If your cough lasts more than 2 weeks
- You have a high temperature and a cough lasting more than 5 days
- If a child with these symptoms is not swallowing.

Call 999 for an Ambulance if:

- You have severe breathing difficulties
- You notice that your child's lips are bluish in colour

Colds & Flu

A cold usually begins gradually, it makes you feel generally unwell and achy, and then produces a runny or blocked nose. After a day or two your nose runs with a clear liquid which then becomes thick and yellow. You may also have a sore throat, sneezing, a cough and a slight temperature. Symptoms may last 7-14 days. A cold is a viral illness which cannot be treated with antibiotics.

What you can do:

- Drink plenty of fluids
- Alternate paracetamol and aspirin every 3 hours; this will ease your throat and muscle pains
- Keep warm and rest
- Ask your pharmacist for advice on what over-the-counter medication would best treat your symptoms
- If you have children, ensure you have paracetamol suitable for children under 12-years and do not give children under 12 aspirin

If you are taking other medicines, always check with your pharmacist. Many cold and flu products already contain paracetamol. Using several products together is very dangerous. If you already have cold or flu medicine in the house, check that it has not passed its sell-by date.

Diarrhoea

Contact your doctor if:

- If there is any blood with the diarrhoea
- A baby, or child with diarrhoea is drowsy or refuses to drink for a few hours
- You have a fever with the diarrhoea
- The diarrhoea lasts more than a week (more than two days in a child)
- You pass little or no urine over 12 hours (6 hours in babies) or;
- You think you have picked up a stomach bug from overseas
- Diarrhoea is unpleasant but rarely dangerous. Its most usual cause is a sudden change of diet; over eating; over drinking or it can follow travel to a foreign country.
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Diarrhoea is often accompanied by a colicky (cramp like) pain in the tummy. It may also be accompanied by vomiting.

What you can do:

- Miss the next meal or two
- Drink plenty of clear fluids (water or squash)
- Take paracetamol for colic-like tummy pains
- Take rehydration medicine available from your pharmacist

Burns & Scalds

What you can do:

- Immediately run cold water on the burn and keep it there for 10 minutes (this will help to cool the burn and relieve the pain)
- Do not remove clothing or anything else that sticks to the burn
- Do not burst any blisters that form
- Do not put on any creams

Go to your nearest accident and emergency department if:

- The burn is large, covers a joint, is not painful to touch, is on a child, or if there is sickness, shivering or a temperature
Cover the burn area with ordinary kitchen cling film

Chest Pains

Getting pains in the chest may be a symptom of a heart attack or it can be caused by other problems. Stabbing chest pain when you twist is usually your chest wall muscle and you can treat this with simple painkillers. Shooting pains which last a few seconds are usually not a cause for concern. If chest pain happens with a cough or fever, it can be a sign of pleurisy, in which case you should contact your doctor during normal surgery hours.

Contact your doctor immediately if:

- You know you have a heart problem and have a nitrate spray or tablets, but after using these, your symptoms do not settle within 5 minutes.

Call 999 for an Ambulance if:

- The chest pain is severe and lasts for more than 10 minutes; and
- It spreads to your jaw or arm;
- You look pale or grey;
- You feel sick or cold;
- You sweat; or
- You become breathless

Earache

Earache can be caused by an infection or even by wax in your ear. If the cause is an infection you will usually have a temperature and feel 'flu-like'. Most infections clear within a few days, although you may not be able to hear properly for a short while after.

What you can do:

- Take regular painkillers, such as paracetamol or Ibuprofen

Contact your doctor if:

- The earache continues for more than 12 hours after taking painkillers
- The ear starts running
- The deafness continues for more than a few days after the infection has cleared

Insect Bites & Stings

What you can do:

- For wasp stings, bathe the area in vinegar. For bee stings, remove the sting and bathe the area in baking soda and water mixture
- Rub calamine lotion or other soothing creams on the area

Serious stings are rare. They happen if you are allergic to bee or wasp stings or you are stung on the tongue or throat. Some people can be severely allergic to insect bites or stings.

If you have a severe allergic reaction, call 999 for an ambulance.

Meningitis

Most people become very worried when they hear the word 'meningitis'. In fact, single cases are rare and clusters are even rarer. The illness develops very quickly. Specific symptoms of meningitis include one or more of the following:

- High temperature or fever
- Cold hands and feet when the rest of the body is burning
- Vomiting
- Severe headache
- Stiff neck
- Dislike of bright lights
- A bruising rash

The rash usually starts as small red or purple pin pricks which then join to form red and purple blotches.

If you think you or your child has meningitis, you should contact your doctor immediately or call 999 for an Ambulance.

Toothache

Your doctor is not trained to deal with dental problems. Dentists do not work in Accident & Emergency departments. If you have toothache, or an abscess in your mouth, especially if you have swelling around the tooth, you should contact your dentist.

What you can do:

- Take regular painkillers, such as paracetamol
- Contact your dentist during normal surgery hours
- Unlike registration with your family doctor, registration with your NHS dentist only lasts for 15-months. It is therefore important that you attend regularly to maintain your registration.

General

It is sometimes possible to be ill even though you do not actually feel unwell. You should contact your doctor during normal surgery hours within 10 days if you notice any of the following:

- Feeling very tired for no apparent reason
- Losing significant weight for no apparent reason
- Feeling very thirsty a lot of the time for no apparent reason
- Changes in colour, texture or size to a mole on your skin
- Persistent indigestion or heartburn
- Loss of blood when you cough, vomit, pass water, or from your bowels
- Changes to your voice – hoarseness or huskiness for no apparent reason

Medicine Cabinet

You should always keep any medicines you have at home in a safe place, preferably in a locked cabinet.

Keep your medicines out of the reach of children
Always read labels carefully and follow the instructions
Make sure medicines are not out of date

Some useful suggestions of items you might wish to keep in your medicine cabinet:

Paracetamol syrup for children	Calamine lotion
Rehydration medicine	Cough Mixture
Scissors	Paracetamol
Tweezers	
Bandages	
Cotton wool	
Indigestion relief	
Plasters	
Safety pins and tape	
Thermometer	
Antiseptic cream	

A&E is for Accidents & Emergencies only.

The Out of Hours service is for urgent and serious medical problems.

It is important to use the service responsibly so that your doctor can see the patients who are most in need when the surgery is closed. If you genuinely need medical help, you should not be afraid to call your GP. There are occasions when you can treat minor illnesses yourself, or they can wait until normal surgery hours

NHS Direct

NHS Direct is a 24 hour telephone helpline. The helpline is staffed by nurses who can help reassure you and give you telephone advice and health information. Anyone can ring NHS Direct, at any time, for health advice.

If you feel that there is something wrong with you or someone you are calling about, an NHS Direct nurse will be able to help you and:

- Tell you whether the symptoms can be managed safely at home and advise you on what to do to treat yourself or the person you are worried about
- Advise you if you do need to seek further help from a medical professional and direct you to the right service. In an emergency the nurse can also transfer you directly to the ambulance service.

NHS Direct is staffed by experienced nurses who are specially trained to give advice over the phone. They will ask you a series of questions, which will help them decide how serious your problem is.

BAYCALL OUT OF HOURS GP – 0845 052 4999

Accident and Emergency Department

The Accident and Emergency department provides a 24 hour service based at the Royal Lancaster Infirmary.

On arrival, patients are assessed and if it is appropriate then you could be referred to another care provider e.g. GP or dentist.

Patients who have suffered accidents or medical emergencies will be seen in order of clinical priority and if you present with a minor injury or illness you should expect a wait to be seen. They do however endeavour to see and treat patients as timely as possible.

If your condition is not an emergency and you are unsure about attending A/E please contact NHS Direct first who will give you advice and information.

July 06 Lynn Jones