

When your child is sick



**Advice to guardians of children
at the age of 0-5 years**

How infections spread

Children are often sick. Often about 6-8 times per year. A cold can last 1-2 weeks but a cough can last longer.

Viruses (about 90% of illness)

Examples: Common cold, stomach flu, eye infections and bronchitis.

- **Antibiotics do not help in viral illness.**
- **The most common transmission routes** in both viral and bacterial infections are through close contact or exposure to droplets, e.g. from coughing or sneezing.

Bacteria (less often)

Examples: Some ear infections, pneumonia and cellulitis.

- **Sometimes antibiotics are needed.**



What can I do to help prevent infections?

- **Wash** the child's hands after daycare, visits and hobbies.
- Use **hand sanitizer** if time is lacking or if the next sink is far away.
- **Avoid** close contact with the infected/sick.
- Provide your child with the recommended **vaccinations**.

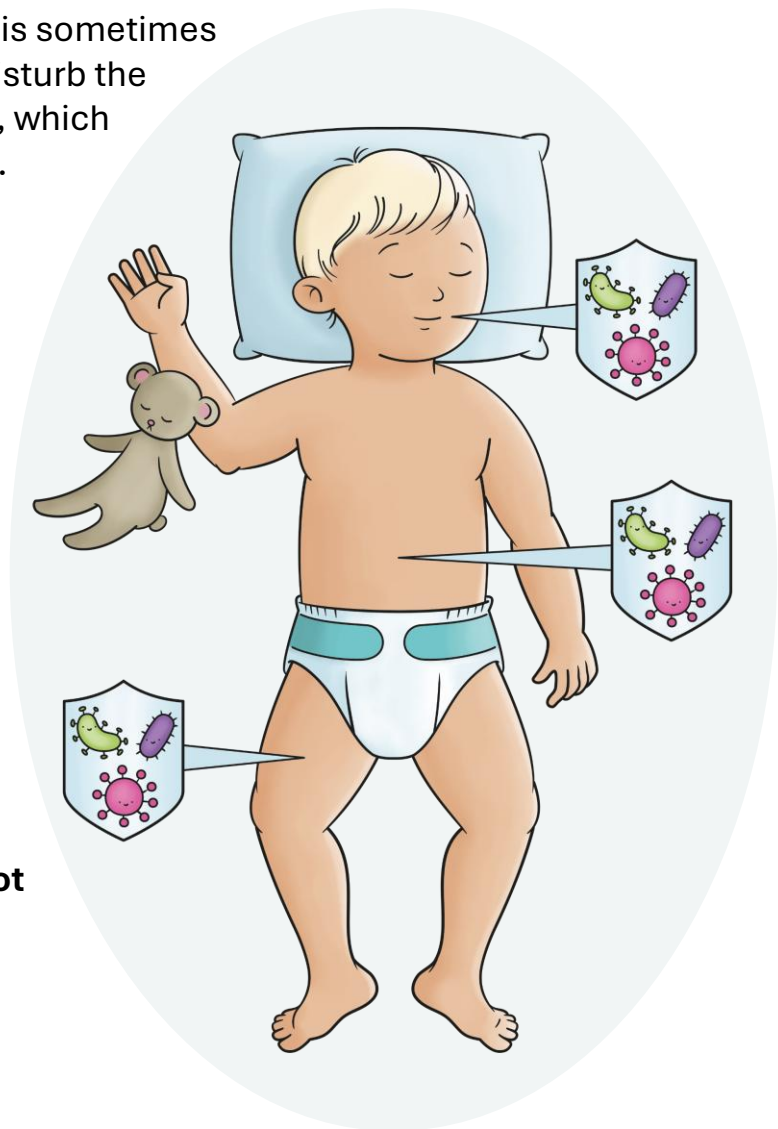


The microbiome and antibiotics

- **Billions** of bacteria live in and on our body. They play a part in our **immune response** and they help us digest and absorb nutrients in the bowels.
- A healthy microbiome works like a **shield** against harmful microbes, which are also called **pathogens**.
- Treatment with **antibiotics** is sometimes necessary, however, they disturb the balance of the microbiome, which can take months to recover.

Food for thought!

- **Antibiotic-resistant** bacteria can sometimes gain a foothold with repeat exposure to antibiotics.
- Traditional antibiotics do **not** cure illness caused by viral infections.

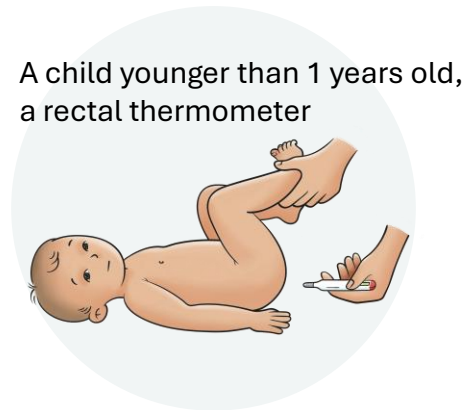
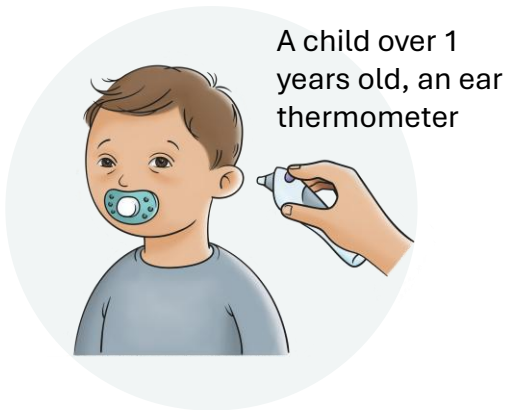


Fever in a child

Temperature = 38°C or higher.

- **Common**, usually harmless, a protective response of the immune system.
- For **infants**, the best way to measure temperature is *rectally*. An *in-ear* device is more convenient in older children.

Call **1700** for
consultation
with a nurse.
Open 24/7.



What can I do at home?

- Offer the child plenty of liquids and keep it light-clothed indoors.
- Consider fever-reducing medication* if the child is feeling ill, is crying a lot, is irritated or has reduced food or fluid intake.



* Examples of fever reducing meds are paracetamol and ibuprofen, as a suppository or mixture. Info on dosing can be found at [Heilsuvera.is](https://www.heilsuvera.is), by calling 1700 or in pharmacies.

Seek care the same day

If a child 3 months or younger

- Has a fever over 38°C and/or
- Is lethargic or not behaving as usual, does not drink.

Seek health care services if a child 3 months of age or younger has a fever

If a child 3-6 months of age:

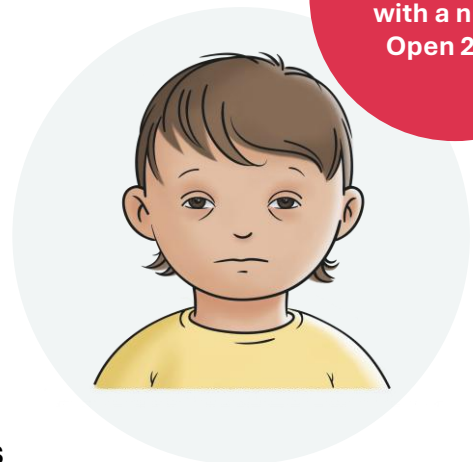
- Has a **high fever**.
- The child is tired and has no energy to play despite fever reducing treatment.
- The child does not drink or eat.

If any child, regardless of age:

- Is tired and has no energy to play despite fever reducing treatment.
- Has a fever of 38°C for over 4 days.
- Has a fever of 41°C or a fever that responds poorly to fever reducing treatment.
- Has a febrile seizure for the first time.
- Appears to be in great pain or is crying and can't be comforted.
- Does not drink or eat.
- Has a dry mouth or absence of tears when crying.



Call 1700 for consultation with a nurse. Open 24/7.

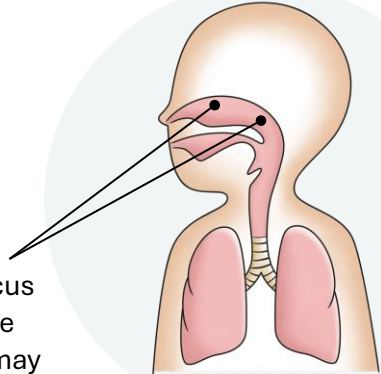


Common cold

Characterized by:

- Coughing
- A runny/stuffed nose
- Runny eyes
- Sore throat
- Fever

In a common cold mucus can build up in the nose and throat. Breathing may get noisy and eating and drinking can take more effort.



What can I do at home?

- Offer the child fluids, repeatedly.
- Use saline drops or spray.*
- Give the child pain/fever reducing medication as needed / recommended.
- Elevate the head of the bed (older children).



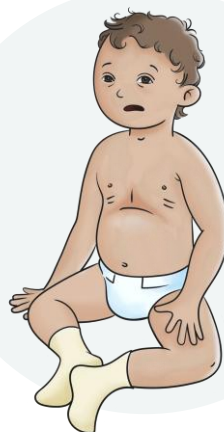
* Saline solutions that relieve nasal congestion and reduce mucus in the nose are available in pharmacies. A nasal aspirators can be used in children that have trouble blowing their nose, but should be used carefully.

Seek care the same day

If the child:

- Has strained or difficulty breathing.
- Is breathing rapidly at rest.
- Has bluish lips or has an unusual change in skin color.
- Is not breastfeeding or drinking fluids despite using saline nasal drops or aspirator.
- Is unusually tired and does not play despite fever/pain reducing medication.

Call **1700** for
consultation
with a nurse.
Open 24/7.



Call 1700 or your primary care clinic for assistance

If the child:

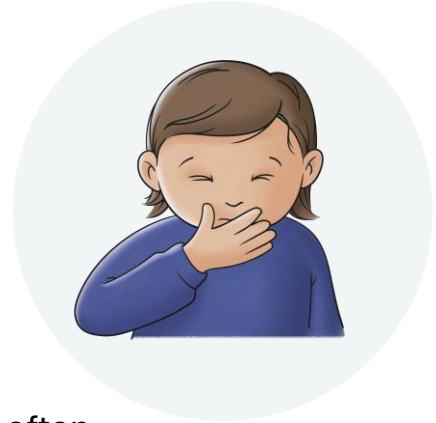
- Is unusually fatigued/tired.
- Has strained or noisy breathing.
- Has had a cough for over 1 month.
- Has had a fever for more than 4 days.
- Has ear pain causing persistent crying or distress despite medication.



Stomach flu (gastroenteritis)

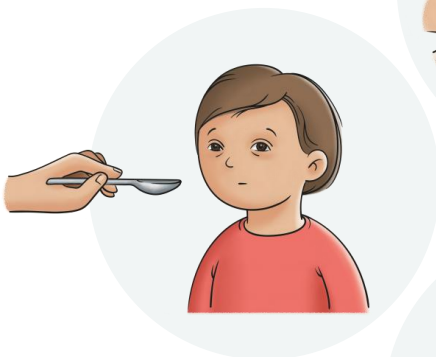
Is often **very contagious!**

- Expect children to be contagious for **at least 2 days** after the last bout of vomiting or diarrhea.



What can I do at home?

- Offer plenty of fluid, little each time but often.
- Continue offering breast or special formula milk.
- In young children sugar/salt dissolvable powder or tablets can be helpful to replenish electrolytes, fluid balance and glucose.
- Avoid sour drinks, soft drinks and fatty or oily food.
- **Advice on gastroenteritis can be found at the website Heilsuvera.is.**



Offering **smaller amounts** of fluid at a time but **frequently** can be helpful



Wash hands regularly with soap and water



Seek care the same day

If the child:

- Is unusually tired/lethargic and has no energy to play.
- Urinates rarely or not at all.
- Refuses to breastfeed or drink other fluids.
- Has blood in the stool or severe abdominal pain.



Call 1700 or your primary care clinic for advice

If the child:

- Is not improving after 24 hours.
- Has a high fever.
- Has had diarrhea for more than 2 weeks.
- Got sick abroad or shortly after returning home.



Where to seek care for a sick child?

In the capital area

- Office hours: **Call 1700**, use the online chat at [Heilsuvera.is](https://heilsuvera.is) or contact your primary care clinic.
- Outside of office hours: **Call 1700**, visit Læknavaktin or Domus pediatric clinic, during opening hours.

The pediatric emergency unit at Landspítali is open 24/7 and provides care to acutely ill children after a consultation with a healthcare professional.

Outside of the capital area

- Office hours: **Call 1700**, use the online chat at [Heilsuvera.is](https://heilsuvera.is) or contact your primary care clinic.
- Outside of office hours: **Call 1700**.

A doctor is on call in all rural districts of Iceland (via 1700).

In serious illness/emergencies – Call emergency line 112

**Call 1700
at any time
for advice
from a nurse.
Open 24/7.**



Development Center for Primary Healthcare in Iceland

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**Detailed information on
common infectious diseases
in children can be found here**