

GP's advice on what to do if your child falls ill over half-term

Parents and carers are being urged to plan ahead for the fast-approaching half-term holiday so they are fully prepared if their child becomes ill.

As the colder winter months approach, and with COVID-19 still a considerable public health risk, illnesses are on the rise across Hampshire and the Isle of Wight with GPs and the NHS already facing challenges around demand for services.

Dr Matt Nisbet, a Hampshire GP and a clinical lead for the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board (ICB), said: "The NHS is here for you – and in a life-threatening emergency you should always dial 999."

"Fortunately, most medical issues are not emergencies and there are lots of other sources of medical care and advice. We're really proud of the Healthier Together website (<https://what0-18.nhs.uk/>) which has been developed by our local children's health specialists. Thousands of parents and young people use this every month to obtain advice on a range of health conditions.

"There is now also a Healthier Together app which I'd encourage parents and caregivers to download and look through before their children become unwell.

"As well as offering advice on how to recognise serious illness in children and how to manage minor complaints, this links in with the team at your local surgery, for the many surgeries who have signed up to use the system."

Sore throats and a blocked nose are usually the sign of a cold. Other symptoms include sneezing, a stuffy and/or runny nose, coughing, chills, aches, a mild fever, and swollen lymph glands.

Flu has symptoms such as a sudden fever, usually above 38°C, accompanied by chills and shakes, extreme fatigue, muscle aches, a hacking cough, nausea, and vomiting.

Dr Nisbet said: "Pharmacists are valued members of the team who can give advice on minor ailments – including in children. We would want to be particularly careful, however, with younger babies and especially those under 3 months. Babies under this age with a fever over 38 should be seen urgently by a healthcare professional.

"We're advising parents, carers and any relatives who will look after children over the half-term to ensure they're stocked-up on medicines including children's pain relief. Your pharmacist can help you choose what you may need.

“Please do check that any medicines that you do already have are in date and always read the label. A suitable thermometer is useful too, to keep an eye on your child’s temperature.”

“Also, make sure your child washes their hands regularly, particularly after playing or going to the toilet and before they eat. This will help reduce the spread of germs and keep down instances of diarrhoea and vomiting or norovirus.”

GP surgeries main opening hours are Monday to Friday, 8am to 6.30pm. Outside these times, your local out of hours GP service can be accessed by calling 111 or using the NHS.uk website. 111 will arrange for you to see an out of hours GP, nurse or other member of the clinical team if needed.

Urgent Treatment Centres and pharmacies are equipped to deal with minor injuries, such as cuts or sprains. Please only go to a hospital’s Emergency Department for life-threatening accidents and emergencies.

Whilst the NHS encourages families to protect themselves and each other with vaccines, it is important that having a flu or a COVID-19 vaccine is an informed choice. Parents/guardians must give consent for their child to be vaccinated. To find out information about vaccinations for children in the 5-11 and 12-15 age groups, visit the ICB website [here](#).

ENDS

Notes to reporters:

1. For further information or to request an interview all media inquiries should be directed to hiowicb-hsi.communications@nhs.net
2. The ICB is the statutory organisation responsible for setting the strategic plan for the NHS to deliver its part of the health and care strategy. It allocates NHS resources works through our transformation programmes to ensure the right health services are being delivered to people across the area.