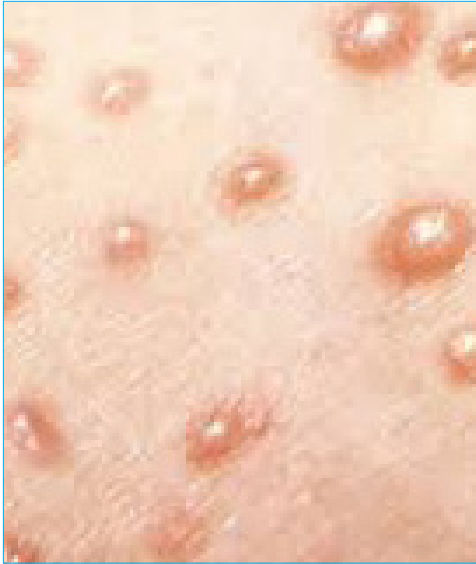


A GUIDE TO COMMON CHILDHOOD ILLNESSES

**CHICKEN POX
ECZEMA
HEADLICE
IMPETIGO
MUMPS
RINGWORM
RUBELLA
SLAPPED CHEEK**



CHICKEN POX



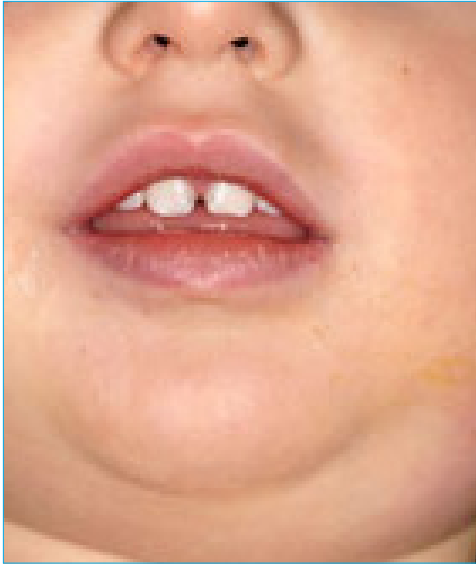
ECZEMA



HEADLICE



IMPETIGO



MUMPS



RINGWORM



RUBELLA



SLAPPED CHEEK

CHICKEN POX

SYMPTOMS

Chickenpox is a common illness that mainly affects children and causes an itchy, spotty rash. Most children will catch chickenpox at some point. It can also occur in adults who didn't have it when they were a child. It's usually mild and clears up in a week or so, but it can be dangerous for some people, such as pregnant women, newborn babies and people with a weakened immune system.

The symptoms of chickenpox start one to three weeks after becoming infected. The main symptom is a rash that develops in three stages:

- 1. Spots** – red raised spots develop on the face or chest before spreading to other parts of the body
- 2. Blisters** – over the next few hours or the following day, very itchy fluid-filled blisters develop on top of the spots
- 3. Scabs and crusts** – after a further few days, the blisters dry out and scab over to form a crust; the crusts then gradually

TREATMENT AT HOME

Chickenpox can usually be treated at home.

You or your child will probably feel pretty miserable and uncomfortable, but treatment can help relieve the symptoms.

The following can help:

- Use paracetamol to relieve fever and discomfort – don't use anti-inflammatory painkillers, such as ibuprofen, as they can sometimes make people with chickenpox very ill
- Use calamine lotion, moisturising creams or cooling gels to ease itching
- Tap or pat the skin rather than scratching it – it's important to avoid scratching because this can lead to further problems
- Drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated

You should also take steps to stop chickenpox spreading, such as staying away from school or work until the last blister has scabbed over.

ECZEMA

SYMPTOMS

Atopic eczema, also known as atopic dermatitis, but usually just called eczema, is a long-term condition causing itchy, red, dry and cracked patches of skin.

Eczema is a chronic (long-term) problem for many people. It is most common among infants, many of whom, however, outgrow it before school age.

Almost always, there's an itch before a rash appears in eczema.

Typically, eczema shows itself as:

- Patches of itchy, dry, thickened skin, usually on the hands, arms, neck, face and legs. In children, the inner creases of the knees and elbows are often involved.
- Sores with crusts, caused by scratching.

SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE

HEADLICE

SYMPTOMS

Head lice are tiny insects that live in hair. Nits are the empty egg cases attached to hair that head lice hatch from. Head lice are a common problem, particularly in school children aged 4-11.

They're largely harmless, but can live in the hair for a long time if not treated and can be irritating and frustrating to deal with.

Head lice are spread by direct head to head contact. They climb from one person's hair to another.

HOW TO SPOT HEAD LICE

Head lice can be difficult to spot, even when the head is closely inspected. They're very small whitish or grey-brown insects that range from the size of a pinhead to the size of a sesame seed.

The only way to be sure someone has head lice is to find a live louse by combing their hair with a special fine-toothed comb. This is called detection combing.

Less reliable signs of head lice include:

- small white eggs or nits (egg cases) in the hair behind the ears or at back of the neck
- an itchy scalp
- a rash on the back of the neck
- feeling as though something is moving in the hair

HOW TO GET RID OF HEAD LICE AND NITS

Treatments to get rid of head lice are available to buy from pharmacies, supermarkets and online. You don't usually need to see your GP.

The main treatments are:

- Lotions or sprays that kill head lice – these can be very effective, but some aren't suitable for pregnant or breastfeeding women, or for children under two
- Removing head lice with a specially designed comb – this is suitable for everyone and relatively inexpensive, but needs to be repeated several times and can take a long time to do thoroughly

A pharmacist can advise you about the treatments available if you're not sure which is best for you or your child.

IMPETIGO

SYMPTOMS

NON-BULLOUS IMPETIGO

The symptoms of non-bullous impetigo begin with the appearance of red sores – usually around the nose and mouth but other areas of the face and the limbs can also be affected.

The sores quickly burst leaving behind thick, golden crusts typically around 2cm across. The appearance of these crusts is sometimes likened to cornflakes stuck to the skin. After the crusts dry, they leave a red mark that usually fades without scarring. The time it takes for the redness to disappear can vary between a few days and a few weeks.

The sores aren't painful, but they may be itchy. It's important not to touch or scratch the sores because this can spread the infection to other parts of the body, and to other people.

BULLOUS IMPETIGO

The symptoms of bullous impetigo begin with the appearance of fluid-filled blisters (bullae) which usually occur on the central part of the body between the waist and neck, or on the arms and legs. The blisters are usually about 1-2cm across. The blisters may quickly spread, before bursting after several days to leave a yellow crust that usually heals without leaving any scarring. The blisters may be painful and the area of skin surrounding them may be itchy. As with non-bullous impetigo, it's important not to touch or scratch the affected areas of the skin.

SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE

Speak to your GP if you think you or your child may have symptoms of impetigo. It usually gets better without treatment in around two to three weeks, however treatment is often recommended because it can reduce the length of the illness to around seven to 10 days and can lower the risk of the infection being spread to others. The main treatments prescribed are antibiotic creams or antibiotic tablets. These usually have to be used for around a week.

MUMPS

SYMPTOMS

Mumps is a contagious viral infection that used to be common in children before the introduction of the MMR vaccine.

It's most recognisable by the painful swellings at the side of the face under the ears (the parotid glands), giving a person with mumps a distinctive "hamster face" appearance.

Other symptoms of mumps include headaches, joint pain and a high temperature, which may develop a few days before the swelling of the parotid glands.

SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE

It's important to contact your GP if you suspect mumps.

TREATMENT

There's currently no cure for mumps, but the infection should pass within one or two weeks.

Treatment is used to relieve symptoms and includes:

- Getting plenty of bed rest and fluids
- Using painkillers, such as ibuprofen and paracetamol – aspirin shouldn't be given to children under 16
- Applying a warm or cool compress to the swollen glands to help relieve pain.

RINGWORM

SYMPTOMS

Ringworm is a very infectious and common skin infection causing a ring shaped red rash. It is most common among children, but can affect people of any age.

Ringworm of the scalp:

- Dry, brittle hair or hair loss in patches
- Severe itching
- Red-ringed patch of small blisters or scaly skin

Ringworm of the body:

- Red-ringed patch of small blisters or scaly skin
- Severe itching is sometimes present

SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE

It's important to contact your GP if you suspect Ringworm.

TREATMENT

Your doctor may prescribe an antifungal medication. These drugs work to kill fungi and prevent the condition from coming back.

You may use the antifungal agent on your skin as a medicated shampoo, powder, cream or lotion; or you may be given a tablet so the medicine can spread throughout your body. You may be recommended a combination of these treatments.

RUBELLA

SYMPTOMS

Rubella (german measles) is a viral infection that's now rare in the UK. It's usually a mild condition that gets better without treatment in 7 to 10 days.

- A red-pink skin rash made up of small spots
- Swollen glands around the head and neck
- A high temperature (fever)
- Cold-like symptoms such as a cough and runny nose
- Aching and painful joints – more common in adults

The symptoms of rubella usually only last a few days, but your glands may be swollen for several weeks.

SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE

You should always contact your GP or NHS 111 if you suspect rubella.

TREATMENT

If you have rubella, you'll be infectious to other people from one week before symptoms develop, and for up to four days after the rash first appeared. You should stay away from school or work for four days after the rash starts to avoid infecting others, and try to avoid contact with pregnant women during this time.

SLAPPED CHEEK

SYMPTOMS

Some people with slapped cheek syndrome won't notice any early symptoms, but most people will have the following symptoms for a few days:

- a slightly high temperature (fever) of around 38C (100.4F)
- a runny nose
- a sore throat
- a headache
- an upset stomach
- feeling generally unwell

The infection is most contagious during this initial period.

After a few days, a distinctive bright red rash on both cheeks (the so-called "slapped cheeks") normally appears, although adults may not get this. By the time this rash develops, the condition is no longer contagious. After another few days, a light pink rash may also appear on the chest, stomach, arms and thighs. This often has a raised, lace-like appearance and may be itchy.

MEDICAL ADVICE

You don't usually need to see your GP if you think you or your child has slapped cheek syndrome, as the condition normally gets better on its own. It is usually mild and should clear up without specific treatment.

If you or your child is feeling unwell, you can try the following to ease the symptoms:

- Rest and drink plenty of fluids – babies should continue normal feeds
- For a fever, headaches or joint pain, you can take painkillers, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen. Children under 16 shouldn't take aspirin.
- To reduce itching, you can take antihistamines or use an emollient (moisturising lotion) – some antihistamines are not suitable for young children, so check with your pharmacist first.

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