

# Children's medicines

## Not always needed for childhood illnesses

**Most illnesses get better by themselves and make your child stronger and able to resist similar illnesses in the future.**

Paracetamol and ibuprofen are often used to relieve the discomfort caused by a high temperature. Some children, for example those with asthma, may not be able to take ibuprofen, so check with your pharmacist, GP or health visitor. Both paracetamol and ibuprofen are safe and effective when used correctly.

Don't give aspirin to children under 16 unless specifically prescribed by a doctor. If you're breastfeeding ask your health visitor, midwife or GP for advice before taking aspirin yourself.

Children don't often need antibiotics. Most childhood infections are caused by viruses. Antibiotics are medicines which kill bacteria. They work only against bacteria, not the viruses that cause the majority of sore throats, colds, sinus infections and bronchitis. For bacterial infections however, antibiotics work quickly and symptoms usually improve within 24-48 hours. Often children can feel completely better shortly after beginning the antibiotic course. To beat the bacterial infection, it is important that your child finishes the entire course as prescribed, even if your child seems better.

### Pharmacist says

- Always tell the Pharmacist how old your child is and whether they have any conditions like asthma.
- Always follow the instructions on the label or ask the pharmacist if you're unsure.
- Ask for sugar-free medicines if they're available.
- Look for the expiry date. Don't use out-of-date medicines.
- Only give your child medicine given to you by your GP, pharmacist or usual healthcare professional. Never use medicines prescribed for anyone else.
- Keep all medicines out of your child's reach and out of sight if possible.

### Checking a child's temperature

**Digital thermometers** are quick to use, accurate and can be used under the arm (always use the thermometer under the arm with children under five years old). Hold your child's arm against their body and leave the thermometer in place for the time stated in the instructions.

**Ear thermometers** are put in the child's ear. They take the temperature in a few seconds and do not disturb the child, but they're expensive. Ear thermometers may give low readings when not correctly placed in the ear. Read the instructions carefully.

**Strip-type thermometers**, which you hold on your child's forehead, are not always an accurate way of taking their temperature. They show the temperature of the skin, not the body.

**Mercury-in-glass thermometers** haven't been used in hospitals for years and are no longer available to buy. Do not use mercury thermometers. If your child is exposed to mercury, get medical advice immediately.

**A normal temperature is between 36-36.8°C (96.8-98.24°F).**

Source: NHS Choices.

**1**

My child has a bad cold and I want to get some antibiotics from my GP.

**2**

Do not expect your GP to automatically give you antibiotics (overuse can cause resistance in bacteria).

**3**

Talk to your GP about other medicines.

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