

## When Your Toddler is Sick

Toddlers can get sick very quickly. You may suddenly notice glassy eyes or pale skin. Or your child might cry more or be extra clingy. If you're unsure of what to do, you can get advice through:

- your doctor or pharmacist
- a public health nurse
- HealthLink BC at 8-1-1. Free information from registered nurses in 130 languages anytime – day or night. You can also speak to a pharmacist about medications from 5 pm to 9 am nightly.

### Fever

#### What is a fever?

A temperature of **38°C (100.4°F) or higher** when measured in the armpit. Fever is a way for the body to fight infection. It's not usually dangerous, especially if there are no other symptoms and if it goes away in 3 or 4 days. But it can make your toddler uncomfortable and dehydrated.



#### DID YOU KNOW

Your child's temperature changes throughout the day. It's lowest in the early morning and highest in the early evening.

Method	Normal temperature range
Armpit	36.5°C to 37.5°C (97.8°F to 99.5°F)
Mouth (not recommended for toddlers)	35.5°C to 37.5°C (95.9°F to 99.5°F)
Ear (2 years and older)	35.8°C to 38°C (96.4°F to 100.4°F)
Rectum (bum)	36.6°C to 38°C (97.9°F to 100.4°F)



#### HOW TO

##### Check your toddler's temperature in the armpit

1. Put the tip of a digital thermometer high up in the centre of your toddler's armpit. Make sure it's touching bare skin on all sides.
2. Tuck his arm snugly against his body.
3. Comfort and distract him.
4. Wait at least 3 minutes, or until the thermometer beeps.
5. Gently remove.

**Don't** use mercury (glass) thermometers (which can be dangerous), forehead strips or pacifier thermometers (which are less accurate), or mouth thermometers (which are hard for toddlers to keep under the tongue).

Temperatures taken in the rectum (bum) are very accurate. But only use this method if you have a rectal thermometer, if you've been taught how to use it safely by a health care provider, and if you feel comfortable doing so.

#### What you can do

- ✓ Let him rest.
- ✓ Breastfeed more, and offer him more to drink between feedings.
- ✓ Take off any extra clothes he's wearing.
- ✓ Give him a lukewarm bath.
- ✓ Give him extra attention.
- ✓ Practise good hand washing. (See [Preventing Sickness](#))
- ✓ Give him acetaminophen (Children's Tylenol). Read the label carefully to find the right amount.



#### DID YOU KNOW

Fever doesn't necessarily tell you how sick your child is. A simple cold may cause a high fever of 39°C (102°F), while a serious infection may cause a mild fever or none at all.

## Cough and Cold

### What is a cold?

A virus that can cause runny nose, cough, fever, sore throat and fussiness. Most children get several mild colds every year. These usually improve within a week and go away within 2 weeks.

### What you can do

- ✓ Let him rest.
- ✓ Give him plenty of fluids like water or your milk, if you're still breastfeeding.
- ✓ Keep the room comfortable but not hot.
- ✓ Use a cool air humidifier, if you have one.
- ✓ Put saline drops in his nose.
- ✓ Use an extra pillow to raise his head by 2½ to 5 cm (1 to 2 inches).
- ✓ Give him extra attention.
- ✓ Practise good hand washing. (See [Preventing Sickness](#))
- ✓ Give him acetaminophen (Children's Tylenol). Read the label carefully to find the right amount.



### DANGER

Never give your toddler aspirin or anything else containing acetylsalicylic acid (ASA), which can damage his brain and liver. Don't give him decongestants or antihistamines unless recommended by your health care provider. And avoid cough and cold medicines, which don't usually work for young children and can be harmful. **Always check with your health care provider before giving your toddler any new medication.**

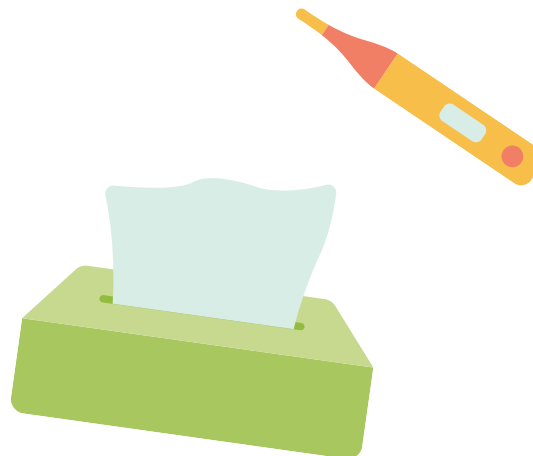
## Flu

### What is the flu ("influenza")?

A virus that can cause more serious fever, headache, muscle pain, runny nose, sore throat, tiredness, cough, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Flu can be life-threatening to very young children and those with other illnesses.

### What you can do

- ✓ **Call your doctor or HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 if you think your toddler has the flu.**
- ✓ Let him rest.
- ✓ Breastfeed him often and give him plenty of water and other fluids.
- ✓ Keep the room comfortable but not hot.
- ✓ Give him extra attention.
- ✓ Practise good hand washing. (See [Preventing Sickness](#))
- ✓ Give him acetaminophen (Children's Tylenol). Read the label carefully to find the right amount.



### SEEK CARE

Call your health care provider if your toddler has signs of dehydration:

- peeing less (fewer than 4 wet diapers in 24 hours in infants and fewer than 3 wet diapers in 24 hours in older children)
- being extra thirsty
- no tears when crying
- dry skin, mouth and tongue
- faster heartbeat
- sunken eyes
- greyish skin
- sunken soft spot on the head (if 18 months or younger)



### HOW TO

#### Help prevent the spread of colds and flu

- ✓ Get the flu vaccine each fall. (See [Preventing Sickness](#))
- ✓ Wash hands regularly. (See [Preventing Sickness](#))
- ✓ Throw away tissues right after use.
- ✓ Cough and sneeze into shirt sleeves, not hands.
- ✓ Avoid touching the face.
- ✓ Disinfect doorknobs, light switches, keyboards and other shared items.
- ✓ Eat well and stay active.

## Visiting a Health Care Provider



### HOW TO Make health care visits easier

Before you go:

- ✓ Try to visit when your toddler is well-rested and fed.
- ✓ Show him what the health care worker might do, like look in his ears.
- ✓ Encourage him to play “doctor” or “dentist” with a toy.
- ✓ Read him books about doctor or dentist visits.
- ✓ Pack a favourite blanket or toy.

At the visit:

- ✓ Talk to him about what’s happening and why. “The nurse is going to give you an immunization in the arm to keep you healthy. I’ll hold you the whole time.”
- ✓ Answer his questions simply and directly.
- ✓ Find ways to praise his efforts, even if he cries the whole time.



### FAMILY STORY

My toddlers played with their doctor kit a lot. They used the stethoscope and pretend needles to make each other “feel better.” I think that’s why they were never scared of the doctor.



### DID YOU KNOW

Antibiotics (which attack bacteria) can’t cure colds or flu (which are caused by viruses). And taking antibiotics means risking side effects, killing good bacteria, and adding to the growth of superbugs.

