

Minor illness

There are many illnesses which can safely be treated at home. If however any symptoms persist, contact the surgery for advice or an appointment. Do not forget that your local pharmacist is able to advise on the management on many illnesses. For all drugs listed do not exceed the recommended doses.



Flu – Typical symptoms include aching on the muscles/ headaches/ sweating/ cough & cold symptoms. The main advice is to rest, drink plenty of fluids & take regular paracetamol. Coughs & colds respond to similar medications & can last up to 2 weeks. Taking deep breaths over a bowl of hot water can help relieve some symptoms, by inhaling the steam.

Temperatures - This can occur with many minor illnesses; regular paracetamol can be used. In addition ibuprofen can be used at the same time, but do not use if you suffer from asthma or indigestion. Tepid sponging also helps to lower the temperature.

Diarrhoea & Vomiting – Usually this settles within 24-48hours. Drink little, but often.

Sore Throats – Most of these are caused by viral infections, therefore antibiotics are not of use. Most settle with 72hours. Throat lozenges can be used alongside simple paracetamol & fluids. In people aged over 15 years gargling with aspirin can also benefit.

Conjunctivitis – Mostly this is viral & therefore does not respond to antibiotics. In children with 'sticky eyes' simply clean from inside to out with cool boiled water. If the white of the eye is not red, it is unlikely to require attention, but if the vision is affected/ the eye is red or painful it is better to seek help from any local optician even if you are not registered with one

Earaches – These are also mostly viral. Most resolve within 72 hours. Pain relief with paracetamol & ibuprofen is best. Resting the painful ear on a hot water bottle wrapped in a towel can help ease the pain.

Chickenpox – This tends to present with an itchy rash all over the body, with the development of blisters & crusty areas. It mostly affects children & is highly contagious. Often children get a temperature & feel generally unwell. Fluids & paracetamol therefore help. To ease the itch calamine lotion can be used. Try to

avoid contact with vulnerable people e.g. very young babies, pregnant ladies or people who have had recent chemotherapy.

Insect Bites – these usually sting & cause swelling & redness where bitten. Rarely they become infected when the redness spreads. Most settle with simple sting relief cream/ cool water & anti-histamines if necessary. Some people are highly allergic to some insects – if you develop swelling of the lips or experience breathing difficulties following a bite you must seek URGENT help.

Sprains – Muscle sprains e.g. from a twisting injury, respond best to rest / ice/ compression & elevation of the affected body part. Simple painkillers as previously mentioned can be used.

Low Back Pain – Usually this is because of muscle strain. The best action to take is to keep moving around, use simple painkillers (as described previously) & place heat to the painful area. Most resolve on their own within a few weeks. If the pain is associated with any weakness or numbness or problems passing urine, you must seek advice urgently.

Cuts – If you cut yourself, run it under cool water to help stop the bleeding & clean the wound. Then apply firm compression with a clean absorbable material such as a towel, and lift the affected body part in the air to slow the bleeding. Most cuts & grazes can then be covered with some antiseptic cream & a simple plaster. If the bleeding fails to stop or the cut is deep –seek advice. If you are cut whilst outside, don't forget to think whether your tetanus is up to date (every 10yrs or 3 boosters in a lifetime).

Burns & Scalds – Immediately place under cold water. Do not attempt to remove clothing if burnt to the skin. If a large area is affected, cover loosely e.g. with cling-film & seek help from the local Minor Injuries Unit. Most small superficial areas respond to cool water & antiseptic lotion.

Veruccas and Warts- There is generally no need to treat warts, as they usually disappear without treatment (about 50% are gone within 6 months), and they do not lead to long-term problems or scarring. OTC treatment is available from the local pharmacist.