

## 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, be extra clingy, not play as much or be more quiet than usual. If you're unsure of what to do, you can get advice through:

- your health care provider or pharmacist
- a public health or primary care 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 their arm snugly against their body.
3. Comfort and distract them.
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 them rest.
- ✓ Breastfeed or chestfeed more, and offer them more to drink between feedings.
- ✓ Take off any extra clothes they're wearing.
- ✓ Give them a lukewarm bath.
- ✓ Give them extra attention.
- ✓ Practise good hand washing. (See [Preventing Sickness](#))
- ✓ Give them acetaminophen (Children's Tylenol). Read the label carefully to find the right amount.
- ✓ Indigenous parents or caregivers can check with FNHA for what over-the-counter medications are covered for free (like Tylenol, saline solution).



#### 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 cold is 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 them rest.
- ✓ Give them plenty of fluids like water or your milk, if you're still breastfeeding or chestfeeding.
- ✓ Keep the room comfortable but not hot.
- ✓ Use a cool air humidifier, if you have one.
- ✓ Put saline drops in their nose.
- ✓ Use an extra pillow to raise their head by 2½ to 5 cm (1 to 2 inches).
- ✓ Give them extra attention.
- ✓ Practise good hand washing. (See [Preventing Sickness](#))
- ✓ Give them 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 their brain and liver. Don't give them 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

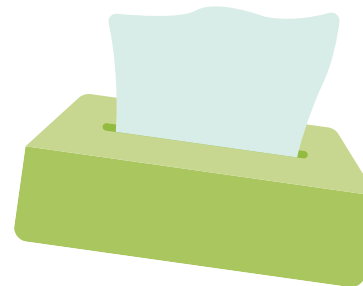
### What is the flu ("influenza") and COVID-19?

The flu is 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.

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2. It is spread mostly from person to person.

### What you can do

- ✓ **Call your health care provider or HealthLink BC at 8-1-1 if you think your toddler has the flu.**
- ✓ Let them rest.
- ✓ Breastfeed or chestfeed often and give them plenty of water and other fluids.
- ✓ Keep the room comfortable but not hot.
- ✓ Give them extra attention.
- ✓ Practise good hand washing. (See [Preventing Sickness](#))
- ✓ Give them 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:

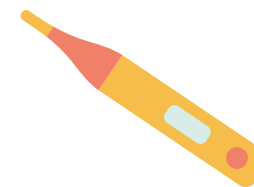
- peeing less (fewer than 4 wet diapers in 24 hours in infants and fewer than 3 wet diapers in 24 hours in older children)
- extra thirsty
- no tears when crying
- dry skin, mouth and tongue
- faster heartbeat
- sunken eyes
- greyish skin
- sunken soft spot on the head (if 18 months or younger)



### MEDICAL EMERGENCY

Call 9-1-1 if your child has:

- trouble breathing
- a lot of blood in their vomit or diarrhea, or if their vomit is bright green
- a fever that lasts more than 5 days
- is very sleepy and difficult to wake





## HOW TO Help prevent the spread of colds, flu and COVID-19

- ✓ Get the flu vaccine each fall.  
(See Preventing Sickness)
- ✓ Get the COVID-19 vaccine.  
(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.
- ✓ Avoid public places (schools/daycares)  
if your child is unwell.

## 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 them what the health care worker  
might do, like look in their ears.
- ✓ Encourage them to pretend to be a  
health care worker with a toy.
- ✓ Read them books about doctor or  
dentist visits.
- ✓ Pack a favourite blanket or toy.

At the visit:

- ✓ Talk to them about what's happening  
and why. "The nurse is going to give you  
a vaccine/medicine in the arm to keep  
you healthy. I'll hold you the whole time."
- ✓ Answer their questions simply and  
directly.
- ✓ Find ways to praise their efforts, even if  
they cry 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 when not needed means risking side effects, killing good bacteria, and adding to the growth of superbugs.

