

# INFECTIONS IN CHILDREN: WHEN AND WHERE TO SEEK HELP?

## Seek care at the right time and place!

In Quebec, about 1 in 2 people who visit the emergency room have non-urgent problems.

Other options are available.

- [Does your child have a health problem that does not seem serious?](#)
- [Need advice about your child's health? Not sure if your child should see a health professional?](#)
- [Does your child need to see a health professional, but it's not an emergency?](#)
- [Does your child have an urgent health problem?](#)

## Does your child have a health problem that does not seem serious?

For some health problems, your child just needs care at home.

You can ask your pharmacist for healthcare advice or consult a reliable resource:

- In the case of fever, see the [Find out more about fever](#) section below
- [What to do in case of flu \(influenza\)](#)
- [What to do in case of gastroenteritis \(stomach flu\)](#)
- [Other health issues](#)



If your child is less than 3 months old and gets sick, consult a health professional.

## Need advice about your child's health? Not sure if your child should see a health professional?

Call 811, option 1.

Free and confidential telephone service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.  
Pediatric line reserved for parents of children aged 0 to 17.

## Does your child need to see a health professional, but it's not an emergency?

Make an appointment with a health professional. Visit [Québec.ca/AccèsSanté](https://quebec.ca/accèsSanté) (Online services section).

## Does your child have an urgent health problem?

- Go to a hospital emergency room.
- Call 911 if needed.

If in doubt, consult the following sections:

[Tout replier](#)

### When to bring your child to a hospital emergency department

Certain situations not described here may require to bring your child to a hospital emergency room.

#### WHEN TO BRING YOUR CHILD TO A HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM

<b>General condition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your child falls asleep for no reason during their activities and is hard to wake up. They are very irritable or inconsolable.</li><li>• Your child becomes pale and very weak indeed.</li><li>• Your child is dehydrated (no urine (pee) in 12 hours, no tears when they cry).</li></ul>
<b>Neurological state</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Your child's muscles are jerking or twitching uncontrollably (spasms).</li><li>• Your child has an unusual headache that is getting worse, with at least one of the following symptoms:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Fever</li></ul></li></ul>

## WHEN TO BRING YOUR CHILD TO A HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Vomiting</li> <li>○ Confusion</li> <li>○ Blurred vision</li> <li>○ Difficulty moving one or more limbs</li> <li>● Your child can't speak or see or suddenly has a weak limb.</li> </ul>
<b>Breathing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Your child has difficulty breathing. Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- They are too out of breath to speak, eat or drink.</li> <li>- When they breathe, their chest is caving in or the sides of their nose move.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Your child's fever is not going down and their chest hurts.</li> </ul>
<b>Eating and digestion</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Your child has blood in their stools (poop) or in their vomit (red, black or like ground coffee).</li> <li>● Your child vomits several times for more than 4 hours and cannot keep down any liquid.</li> <li>● Your child has a stomach ache that won't go away or that gets worse.</li> <li>● Your child can't swallow any liquids.</li> </ul>
<b>Skin</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Your child has a fever and little red or purple spots on their skin. The spots don't disappear when you press on them.</li> <li>● Your child's skin is red and hot (with or without a wound). The area hurts, and the pain is severe and increasing rapidly.</li> <li>● Your child's fingers or toes are cold and turning purple or black.</li> </ul>
<b>Joints</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Your child has a fever and a painful joint, with redness and/or heat.</li> </ul>

### When to call 911

Certain situations not described here may require to call 911.

WHEN TO CALL 911	
<b>General condition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your child doesn't react, even when you speak to or touch them.</li> <li>Your child's lips, fingers or toes are blue.</li> </ul>
<b>Neurological state</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your child's muscles are jerking or twitching uncontrollably (spasms) for at least 5 minutes. The child is still in an abnormal state 15 minutes later.</li> <li>Your child loses consciousness (faints) and won't wake up.</li> </ul>
<b>Breathing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your child can barely breathe.</li> <li>Your child stops breathing for a few seconds (apnea).</li> <li>Your child is drooling saliva and can't swallow any liquids.</li> </ul>

## Find out more about fever

A child under 3 months old has a fever if their temperature taken rectally (bottom) is 38.0 °C (100.4 °F) or higher.  
Consult a doctor:

- if your baby has a fever
- or
- if their temperature taken rectally (bottom) is too low: 36 °C (96.8 °F) or less.

A child aged 3 months or older has a fever if their temperature is:

- 38.5 °C (101.3 °F) or higher, when the temperature is taken rectally (bottom)
- 38.0 °C (100.4 °F) or higher, when the temperature is taken orally (under the tongue)
- 37.5 °C (99.5 °F) or higher, when the temperature is taken in the armpit

Recommendation: The best way to take a child's temperature is rectally (bottom), especially for children aged 3 months or younger.  
For what to do in the case of fever, consult the page [Fever in children](#).

## Information tool

- Poster 8.5 x 11 : [Infections in children – When and where to seek help?](#) (PDF)

## See also

- [Respiratory infections in adults and children: What you should know and do](#)
- [Respiratory infections, parents of young children and pregnant woman: good practices to adopt!](#)
- [Vaccination for children: don't miss it!](#)
- [Quebec.ca/AccèsSanté](http://Quebec.ca/AccèsSanté)

*Content developed by the Direction régionale de santé publique de Montréal (DRSP), in collaboration with the emergency physicians team of the CHU Sainte-Justine and the Direction régionale d'accès aux services médicaux de proximité.*