

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.

Pregnant people and parents of young children

- Does your child have a health problem that does not seem serious?
- Do you 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?
- Find out more about fever
- Information tool
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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 case of fever, see the **Find out more about fever** section below
- [Flu \(influenza\)](#)
- [Gastroenteritis \(stomach flu\)](#)
- [Health Issues \(A to Z\)](#)

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 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:

When to take your child to a hospital emergency department

Some situations not described here may require a visit to a hospital emergency room.

| Condition | When to take your child to a hospital emergency room |
|--------------------|---|
| General condition | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your child falls asleep for no reason during their activities and is hard to wake up. They are very irritable or inconsolable.• Your child becomes pale and very weak.• Your child is dehydrated (no urine (pee) in 12 hours, no tears when they cry). |
| Neurological state | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your child’s muscles are jerking or twitching uncontrollably (convulsion).• Your child has an unusual headache that is getting worse, with at least one of the following symptoms:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Fever○ Vomiting○ Confusion○ Blurred vision○ Difficulty moving one or more limbs• Your child can’t speak or see or suddenly has a weak limb. |
| Breathing | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Your child has difficulty breathing. |

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

When to call 911

Certain situations not described here may require to call 911.

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

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 5 or under.

For what to do in the case of fever, consult the page [Fever in children](#).

Information tool

- [Information tool](#)

See also

- [Respiratory infections in adults and children: what you should know and do](#) (English section)
- [Respiratory infections: pregnant women and parents of young children](#) (English section)
- [Québec.ca/AccèsSanté](#) (Online services section)

Français

- [Infections chez l'enfant : Quand et où consulter?](#)