

Caring for your sick child at home



Advice on flu, COVID-19, or another viral respiratory infection for parents of children aged 0-6 years old.

Do you have questions about your sick child? Call Info Santé at 811 to speak with a nurse. Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It's free and confidential.

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Caring for your sick child at home

How can I help my child when they aren't feeling well but their symptoms don't appear to be serious?

When they have a fever

- Make sure they drink small quantities often.
- Make sure they get some rest time, a nap, or a break.
- Don't overdress them.
- If needed, you can give your child one of the following medications to help bring down their fever:
 - Option 1: acetaminophen (such as Tylenol®, Tempra®)* - only for children more than 3 months old
 - Option 2: ibuprofen (such as Advil®, Motrin®)* - only for children more than 6 months old

*** Please note that the dose varies according to the child's weight. Check the instructions on the packaging.**

For more information about what to do when your child has a fever, see [Fever in children](#).

Video: [La fièvre - Dr Hugo Paquin, CHU- Ste-Justine](#) (in French only)

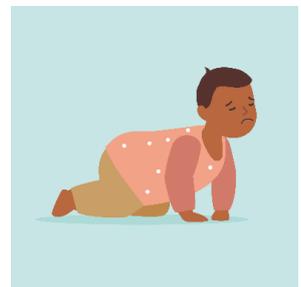
When they have a cough, and a runny or stuffy nose

- Gently clean the nose with saline using a nasal syringe, an irrigation bottle, or a spray.
 - Need help? Check out [the page on nasal hygiene](#) on the CHU Sainte-Justine website to learn various techniques.
- If your child is collaborative:
 - Teach them and encourage them to blow their nose on their own.
 - Teach them to cough and sneeze into their elbow or a paper tissue.
 - Remind them to always wash their hands thoroughly afterwards. Show them how to do it properly.



When they have a sore throat

- Make sure they drink small quantities often.
- Offer them cold liquids, soft foods (such as purées) or frozen foods (such as frozen yogurt).
- If needed, you can give your child one of the following medications:
 - Option 1: acetaminophen (such as Tylenol®, Tempra®)* - only for children more than 3 months old.
 - Option 2: ibuprofen (such as Advil®, Motrin®)* - only for children more than 6 months old.



*** Please note that the dose varies according to the child's weight. Check the instructions on the packaging.**

When they have runny red eyes

- Gently clean their eyes with a clean cloth and warm water. Do not use the same cloth to clean both eyes.
- Always wash your hands properly afterwards.
- If your child is old enough, teach them not to rub their eyes without washing their hands first.
- Dim the lights in the room if light is uncomfortable for your child.

Important:

- **If your child is under 3 months old and has a fever, they must be seen by a doctor.** If they received a vaccine in the last 48 hours, it is recommended to call Info Santé 811 before consulting a doctor.
- **If you are worried about your child's condition,** call Info Santé at 811.

- If your child’s symptoms worsen or they are not getting better after 3 days (72 hours), call Info Santé at 811.

Common symptoms of respiratory infections

How to recognize them

Watch for

COVID-19	Flu (influenza)	Colds	RSV (respiratory syncytial virus)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever • Dry Cough • Fatigue • Decreased sense of smell or taste 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudden fever with shivers • Significant fatigue • Muscle and joint pain • Cough • Headache 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Runny nose • Cough or sneezing • Sore throat • Little or no fever 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Runny nose • Cough • Difficulty breathing • Fever • Decreased appetite

When to go a healthcare professional?

When and where to seek help

You don’t know if your child needs to see a healthcare professional.

Call Info Santé at 811

- Free and confidential service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- A nurse will answer your questions.

Your child needs to see a healthcare professional, but it isn’t urgent.

These alternatives are available:

- Contact your usual clinic.
- Call Info Santé at 811.
- Call Info Santé GAP (Primary Care Access Point) at 811 and select option 3 or [make a request online](#).
- Call or consult your pharmacist.
- Make an appointment on the [Québec Medical Appointment Scheduler](#) (RSVQ).

Your child has an urgent health issue

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

Videos:

- [Quand aller à l'urgence - Dr Hugo Paquin, CHU- Ste-Justine](#) (in French only)
- [Quand ne pas aller à l'urgence - Dr Hugo Paquin, CHU- Ste-Justine](#) (in French only)

You can 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. Examples: <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. • 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

Some 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.

Before going to the Emergency Room, if you have time:

- Bring the child's health insurance card.
- Write down everything related to your child's state of health, such as:
 - Medication they have taken (doses and times)
 - Your child's temperature (temperature, time taken, dates and times)
 - A list of symptoms and when they appeared
- Dress your child in comfortable clothing
- Bring a toy, a book, and a cozy blanket.
- Bring snacks and drinks.

Preventing respiratory infections

Simple tips for protecting your child

Everyday essentials

- Wash your hands and your child's hands frequently.
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow or a paper tissue.
- Wash and disinfect objects and surfaces that are frequently touched:
 - Tables
 - Door handles and light switches
 - Toys
 - Toilets and sinks
- Open the windows for a few minutes several times each day.

Video: Prévenir le virus - Dr Hugo Paquin, CHU- Ste-Justine (in French only)

Protect yourself and your child from respiratory infections

- When your child is sick, limit their contact with other children and avoid being in contact with people who are at risk (such as seniors and people with chronic conditions or a weakened immune system).
- Follow [the recommended vaccination schedule](#).
- If you are pregnant, ask your physician which vaccines are available to you.

Added protection for babies 0–3 months old

- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- If you must receive someone who is sick, ask them to wear a mask.
- Ask all visitors to wash their hands.
- Only receive small groups of people at one time.
- Avoid crowded areas.
- Avoid large gatherings.

Common questions

Simple answers to help parents

- **What indicates a fever in a child under 3 months old?**

The child has a fever if their rectal temperature (in the bum) is 38 °C (100.4 °F) or higher.

 **Recommendation:** For children under 3 months old, always take their rectal temperature (in the bum).

 **Important:** If your child is under 3 months old and has a fever, they must be seen by a doctor. If they received a vaccine in the last 48 hours, it is recommended to call Info Santé 811 before consulting a doctor.

For more information about what to do when your child has a fever, see [Fever in children](#).

- **What indicates a fever in a child over 3 months old?**

The child has a fever if:

- Their rectal temperature (in the bum) is 38.5 °C (101.3 °F) or higher
- Their oral temperature (in the mouth) is 38.0 °C (100.4 °F) or higher
- Their axillary temperature (in the armpit) is 37.5 °C (99.5 °F) or higher

 **Recommendation:** For children under 5 years old, always take their rectal temperature (in the bum).

For more information about what to do when your child has a fever, see [Fever in children](#).

- **Does my child need to see a healthcare professional every time my child has a fever?**
 - If your child is under 3 months old and has a fever, they must be seen by a doctor. If they received a vaccine in the last 48 hours, it is recommended to call Info Santé 811 before consulting a doctor.
 - If your child over 3 months old has a fever:
 - Every situation is different. You can call Info Santé at 811 for advice.
 - Generally, a child with a fever who is in good condition (the child is eating and drinking well, has energy, and takes part in activities) doesn't need to see a healthcare professional.
 - If the fever persists for 3 days or more, the child needs to see a healthcare professional.

For more information, consult the Section: **When to see a healthcare professional**

- **Can I give my child over-the-counter or behind-the-counter medications?**
 - If your child is more than 3 months old, they can be given acetaminophen (such as Tylenol®) for their fever or discomfort (such as a sore throat).
 - If your child is more than 6 months old, they can be given acetaminophen (such as Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (such as Advil®) for their fever or discomfort (such as a sore throat).
 - Do not give your child other over-the-counter or behind-the-counter medications without speaking to your pharmacist or another healthcare professional.

Some useful resources

Multilingual guide

- [When to go to the ER? See our guide with information in 16 languages, the Montreal Children's Hospital.](#)

Online resources

- [Finding a resource in health and social services—Directory of health and social service resources.](#)
- [How to make an appointment: primary care health and social services | Gouvernement du Québec](#)
- [Naître et grandir, website and magazine](#)
- [Fever in Children | Gouvernement du Québec](#)
- [COVID-19 | Gouvernement du Québec](#)
- [Flu \(influenza\) | Gouvernement du Québec](#)
- [Respiratory Syncytial Virus \(RSV\) Infections | Gouvernement du Québec](#)
- [Respiratory infections in adults and children: what you should know and do | Direction régionale de la santé publique de Montréal](#)

- [Respiratory infections: pregnant women and parents of young children | Direction régionale de la santé publique de Montréal](#)
- [Infections in children: When and where to seek help? | Direction régionale de la santé publique de Montréal](#)
- [Childhood vaccinations: Not to be missed! \(FR only\)](#)

Tools

- [Tools for professionals and partners](#)

A regional public awareness and prevention campaign coordinated by the CIUSSS de l'Est-de-l'Île-de-Montréal in collaboration with the CHU Sainte-Justine, the Montreal Children's Hospital, the CHUM, the CIUSSS de l'Ouest-de-l'Île-de-Montréal and the Direction régionale de santé publique de Montréal.