

SELF TREATMENT OF COMMON ILLNESSES AND ACCIDENTS



Many common problems can be treated at home without the need to consult a doctor.

Insect Bites And Stings

Antihistamine tablets and cream will usually relieve most symptoms and can be bought from the chemist without a prescription. Bee stings should be scraped away rather than 'plucked' to avoid squeezing the contents of the venom sac into the wound. If the surrounding redness is getting bigger after two days the bite may be infected and you will need to consult your doctor, as antibiotics may be needed.

Chickenpox

On the first day a rash appears about 3-4 mm across. Within a few hours small water blisters appear in the centre of the patches. During the next three or four days further patches appear and earlier ones will turn crusty and fall off. Calamine lotion may be applied to soothe the often severe itchy rash. Cool baths may help. The most infectious period is from two to three days before the rash appears and up to five days after this date. Children may return to school as soon as the last crusts have dropped off. Children with chickenpox should avoid pregnant women.

Warts And Verrucas

These are caused by a virus and given time will disappear. There are various treatments available from the chemist.

Worms

These can be seen in the motions or suspected by intense itching around the back passage. A simple treatment is available from the chemist.

Cystitis

This is not uncommon in women. It causes a burning sensation during frequent passing of urine. Drink plenty of fluids. If you have a fever, any blood in the urine, or if the symptoms last more than 48 hours consult

Moles

These are normal on the skin: some are present at birth, others appear later in life. You should, however, consult your doctor if your mole develops any of the following:

- a change in colour
- an increase in size
- ulceration
- becomes irregular in edge or colour

Nosebleeds

Sit down, leaning forward with your mouth open and pinch your nose just below the bone for approximately 10 minutes by which time the bleeding should have stopped. If this fails to work repeat the procedure. If the bleeding persists then attend QMC Accident and Emergency Department. Do not blow the nose and avoid hot drinks or food for 24 hours. Apply a small amount of Vaseline to the inside of the nostril if there are recurrences soon afterwards. If the problem persists consult your doctor.

Sunburn

Children are particularly susceptible to sunburn and great care should be taken to avoid overexposure to the sun. Factor 25 (or even higher) sun cream should be used, wear light cotton clothing and keep in the shade.

If sunburn occurs, treat as for other burns i.e. with cold water to remove the heat. Calamine lotion will relieve irritation whilst paracetamol will also help.

Earache

This can be helped with painkillers and decongestants in the first instance. Most bouts of earache will settle within 24 hours. If persistent or accompanied with discharge see the doctor.

Back Pain

Most back pain will settle by itself if the back is rested by sitting as upright as possible or lying flat on your back with your knees bent (a cushion under your knees often helps).

Gentle stretching exercises improve the speed of recovery. Swimming, walking and cycling are excellent when you feel a little more mobile. If there is no improvement after a few days, or if the bladder or bowel control is affected, make an appointment to see a doctor.

Bedsores

Bedsores are far easier to prevent than cure. They are caused by prolonged pressure on certain parts of the body when lying in bed for long periods. They can be prevented by encouraging the person to shift position as often as possible and taking care to smooth out creases in the bottom sheet. Watch out for red marks appearing at pressure points such as heels, elbows, buttocks and hips. If they begin to appear then contact the district nurses before they get worse.

Burns

Apply large quantities of cold water to the affected area as soon as possible and maintain until the pain subsides. This may take as long as 15 minutes. If the skin is unbroken but blistered apply a loose dressing. If the burn is larger than 10cm or the skin is broken, consult your doctor, practice nurse or attend the casualty unit at the Queen's

Medical Centre.

advice. If you have difficulty finding a dentist please ring NHS Nottinghamshire County on 03003001234. If you or your child has a tooth knocked out, carefully pick up the tooth but do not attempt to wash or clean it. Put it straight into a little cold milk and take it with the patient to the dentist.

Fever In children

Cooling a child down will make them feel better and is worth doing even if you want them seen by a doctor as well. Give paracetamol suspension (Calpol or Disprol) regularly four times a day. Ibuprofen syrup can be given in between three times a day. Both are available from the chemist. Give plenty of fluids and strip the child down to light underwear.

Colds

Even in this day and age there is no magic cure for the common cold. Take plenty of drinks and rest. Paracetamol will help relieve the headache, sore throat and aching as well as bringing down the temperature. Antibiotics will not get you better any quicker as they make no difference and may even cause harmful side effects.

Dental Emergencies

You should see your dentist for regular check-ups; also, there is an out-of-hours emergency dental service available to you once you have registered.

Dental problems should be treated by dentists, not by doctors. Dentists can prescribe antibiotics and painkillers just as doctors do. People not registered with a dentist or just visiting locally can consult any dentist for

Minor Cuts And Grazes

Wash the wound thoroughly with water and a little soap. To stop the bleeding apply a clean handkerchief or dressing firmly to the wound for about five minutes. Cover with a clean dry dressing.

Sickness And Diarrhoea

In most cases this is caused by a viral infection which is easily spread from person to person. It is not treatable with antibiotics. In addition to sickness and diarrhoea there may be tummy cramps and a temperature. Water or juices should be taken as often as possible to avoid dehydration, and when settling, gradually introduce a light diet. In very young children and babies, diarrhoea or sickness needs careful attention to avoid dehydration and, if the symptoms persist longer than 24 hours without settling, consult your doctor.

Head Lice

These are common in schoolchildren and not a sign of poor hygiene. Medicated shampoos and lotions are available from the chemist without a prescription. However, it is now recommended that children's hair should be washed, and after using a normal hair conditioner, combed with a fine nit comb to dislodge the eggs. Regular nit combing like this can keep the problem away.

Sprains

First apply a cold compress, such as a bag of frozen peas or ice for 15 to 30 minutes to reduce the swelling. Apply a firm crepe bandage and give the sprain plenty of rest until all the discomfort has subsided. Further strain will inevitably lead to further swelling and a longer recovery period. Painkillers are available via consultation with your pharmacist.

**If in Doubt Contact the local
Pharmacy or Dial 111**