

# The Daily Parent

A NEWSLETTER FOR WORKING PARENTS

ISSUE NO. 48

## HELPING YOUR CHILD TO STAY WELL: And What to Do When Illness Strikes

**E**very child gets sick sometimes. It's a fact of life. Whether your child has a tummy ache, a runny nose, or the flu, sicknesses are a normal, natural part of life. As a parent, you have to deal with it... and it's often an unwelcome "surprise".

However, there are some things you can do to try to help your child avoid getting sick. You can make sure her hands stay as clean as possible, and that she knows how to wash her hands. This lowers her exposure to germs. You can work with your child's doctor to make sure your child is up to date on his vaccines. This will help him avoid harmful and preventable early childhood diseases.

Still, no matter what you do, your child will occasionally get sick. And what should you do then? This issue of *The Daily Parent* will give you tips on how to help your child avoid sickness, and what to do when he does get sick.

### Hand-washing: A Simple Way to Ward Off Illnesses

Germs can be passed onto others easily. Washing hands often and well reduces the chance that germs



will be passed along and that your child will get sick. Children and adults should wash hands after using the bathroom, before preparing food and eating, after handling animals, any time they come inside from the outdoors, and at other times.

Here is the recommended way you can teach your child to wash her hands:

- 1) Wash with warm water: Not too hot or too cold.
- 2) Use soap.
- 3) Take 20 seconds to wash hands—and don't forget between the fingers (about as long as it takes to sing "The ABC Song")
- 4) Remember to wash fingernails.
- 5) Make sure all the soap gets rinsed off.
- 6) Dry hands thoroughly with a towel or air dryer.

If your child is careful about washing her hands at the right times, she will be much less likely to get sick! You can help by being a good example. Follow the guidelines above, so your children have a good model to follow. It's also a good idea to remind them, when you have a meal, or at other appropriate times, to wash their hands!

### Vaccines: Why and When

When children are born, they are naturally immune to many diseases. However, after a few months, that immunity fades and their bodies aren't prepared to fight against diseases. Vaccines give children the

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ability to ward off many of these diseases. For instance, vaccines protect children from: Hepatitis A & B, tetanus, polio, flu, measles, mumps and rubella, bacterial meningitis, and chickenpox.


Most child care programs require children to have at least some of the vaccines listed in the chart. When your child is ready to enter school, they will need to be up-to-date on their vaccines or they may not be able to enter school until they do. This is because children who are current on their vaccines are less likely to get or to pass along diseases. When all the children in a program are healthy, this reduces the risk of your child getting sick.

## What to Do When Your Child is Sick

When your child gets sick, it can be stressful! The

### IMMUNIZATIONS

*(Recommended by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices)*

Age of First Dose	Immunization	Recommended Schedule
<b>Infants</b>  	Hepatitis B (HepB)	Birth, and monthly until 2 years old
	Rotavirus (Rota)	2 months, 4 months, and 6 months
	Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis (DTap)	2 months, 4 months, and 6 months, with fourth dose at 15 and 18 months, and final dose at 4-6 years
	Haemophilus influenzae type B (Hib)	2 months, 4 months, and 6 months
	Pneumococcal (PCV/PPV)	2 months, 4 months, and 6 months
	Inactivated Polio Virus (IPV)	2 months, 4 months
	Influenza	Yearly starting at 6 months
<b>Toddlers</b>	Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR)	Between 12-15 months, final dose between 4-6 years
	Varicella Vaccine	Between 12-15 months, final dose between 4-6 years
	Hepatitis A (Hep A)	2 doses between 1 year and 2 years
<b>Preschoolers</b>	Meningococcal polysaccharide vaccine (MPSV4)	Only for high-risk groups—your doctor will make a recommendation
<b>School-Aged Children</b>	Tetanus and diphtheria toxoids and acellular pertussis vaccine (Tdap)	11-12 years, or 13-18 years, ask your doctor
	Human papillomavirus vaccine (HPV)	Only for females, age 11-12, with boosters 2 and 6 months later
	Meningococcal conjugate vaccine (MCV4)	Age 11-12 years

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## EACH CHILD IS DIFFERENT AND EACH CHILD REACTS DIFFERENTLY TO SICKNESS

most important thing to remember is that the sickness will usually pass in a few days or weeks, and that rest is important for the body to heal.

### Is the Doctor Necessary?

Each child is different, and each child reacts differently to sicknesses. Sometimes, a child just needs sleep and time to get better, such as when they have a cold or even the flu. Sometimes, medicine is needed, such as when they have a bacterial infection. It is always good if you can call your pediatrician or nurse to help determine if they will need to see a doctor. Many doctors have a nurse help-line or service where you can call in and speak with a nurse and they will help you determine what to do.

### Stay Home or Go to School or Child Care?

Your child should stay home from child care or school if he has an illness or condition that could spread to others. In some cases, child care programs don't allow sick children to stay in care. Another reason to keep your child home is that he may be too tired to do any of the normal activities at care or school.



There's no way to know when your child may get sick. If you are working, you may or may not be able to stay home with him. A good idea, in this instance, is to have a back-up plan. Though each suggestion may not work for everyone, here are some ideas for what that back-up plan might be:

- Arrange with your spouse or partner to take turns staying home with a sick child
- Find a neighbor or friend that stays home that can care for your child
- Family members may be able to help



Some conditions may require antibiotics or other medicines that can provide enough relief in a few days for your child to be able to return to child care or school. Get to know your child care or school's policies on illness or communicable conditions.

### Take Care of Yourself

When your child is sick, she usually just needs a chance to rest and some "TLC": tender loving care. And remember, when your child is sick, it's important to take care of yourself. If you need help when your child is sick, ask family or friends to help you with errands, shopping, or other tasks that can help you out.

Young children will always get sick at some time or the other. Most of the time it will not be serious. Try to follow the recommended guidelines for staying well, including taking care of yourself. When your child does get sick, you will be able to handle it, give her lots of attention and comfort, and know this is all a part of growing up.

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## For More Information

- **Is This the Right Place for My Child?: 38 Research-Based Indicators of High-Quality Child Care**, [www.naccrra.org/pubs/](http://www.naccrra.org/pubs/), NACCRRRA. This user-friendly booklet contains a checklist of 38 questions that parents can ask to evaluate the quality of child care programs and explains why each question is important and how it relates to the quality of care. It includes a section on making sure your child care program is safe and healthy for your child.
- **American Academy of Pediatrics**, [www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org), is a national organization committed to the optimal physical, mental, and social health and well-being for all infants, children, adolescents, and young adults. There is a special section of their website just for parents. You can do an online search by health topics.



- **Recommended Immunization Schedules for Ages 0-6 Years, Ages 7-12 Years**. Available at [www.cispimmunize.org](http://www.cispimmunize.org). This is the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' chart on when to immunize your child for what disease. It is updated each year, and the American Academy of Pediatrics helps develop it.
- **NSF Scrub Club**, [www.scrubclub.org](http://www.scrubclub.org) is a fun website designed to teach children how to wash their hands. It is sponsored by the NSF International.

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