

Viral Illness

What is a viral illness?

A virus is a germ that causes most of the illnesses that children suffer from including the common cold, ear infections, diarrhoea, vomiting and the flu. There are hundreds of different viruses.

How did my child get a viral illness?

Viruses spread from person to person by coughing, sneezing, vomiting and via faeces, especially diarrhoea. Viruses spread easily where children have close contact with each other such as at nursery or at school.

As children develop their own defence against illness (their immune system) they are exposed to a variety of viruses and can have 10 to 12 viral infections per year. It is very common for children to become ill from another virus just after they have got better from a different one which makes parents think they are ill all the time.

What are the symptoms of a viral illness?

Viral infections can cause lots of different symptoms. Your child may have one or many of the following:

- Blocked/runny nose associated with coughing/sneezing
- Fever
- Blanching rash (a rash that disappears when you press on it then reappears when you let go)
- Vomiting and diarrhoea
- Feeling more tired/decreased appetite

My child has some of these symptoms. Why are we being sent home?

Most of the time we don't need to treat children with a viral illness. As they are caused by a virus they **do not** get better with antibiotics. The best treatment is to rest at home and allow your child's immune system to get rid of the virus.

What can I do to help?

A number of simple measures can help your child at home:

- Give your child small amounts of fluid regularly to keep them well hydrated. Water is best but you could use diluted fruit juice or squash. Little and often is best.
- You can use paracetamol syrup to make your child feel better and to reduce a fever. You can use ibuprofen syrup **instead of or as well** as paracetamol if your child has a fever (it is safe to give both at the same time). Always follow the instructions on the packet carefully.
- **Do not** give children aspirin

When will my child get better?

Most children will get better in a few days although sometimes it can take a couple of weeks to fully resolve. Coughs can linger for **several weeks**. If your child is not getting any better after a few days or is getting worse, take them back to see your GP.

Are there any complications?

Very occasionally another more serious illness may present early on with similar features to a viral illness. It is important to bring your child back to the emergency department **immediately** if they develop any of the following:

- Become very drowsy or floppy
- Become pale, grey or bluish
- Develop a rash that does not blanch on pressure (does not disappear if you press on it or put a glass tumbler on it)
- Are not drinking enough fluids or struggling to keep fluids down
- Seem to be struggling with their breathing or sound very wheezy
- Become stiff or seem to be making jerking movements

If you have any concerns about your child we are happy to see them again in the emergency department

Patient Experience

We know that being admitted to hospital can be a difficult and unsettling time for you and your loved ones. If you have any questions or concerns, please do speak with a member of staff on the ward or in the relevant department who will do their best to answer your questions and reassure you.

Feedback

Feedback is really important and useful to us – it can tell us where we are working well and where improvements can be made. There are lots of ways you can share your experience with us including completing our Friends and Family Test – cards are available and can be posted on all wards, departments and clinics at our hospitals. We value your comments and feedback and thank you for taking the time to share this with us.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

If you have any concerns or questions about your care, we advise you to talk with the nurse in charge or the department manager in the first instance as they are best placed to answer any questions or resolve concerns quickly. If the relevant member of staff is unable to help resolve your concern, you can contact the PALS Team. We offer informal help, advice or support about any aspect of hospital services & experiences.

Our PALS team will liaise with the various departments in our hospitals on your behalf, if you feel unable to do so, to resolve your problems and where appropriate refer to outside help.

If you are still unhappy you can contact the Complaints Department, who can investigate your concerns. You can make a complaint orally, electronically or in writing and we can advise and guide you through the complaints procedure.

How to contact PALS:

Telephone Patient Services: 0300 123 1732 or via email at: wah-tr.PALS@nhs.net

Opening times:

The PALS telephone lines are open Monday to Friday from 8.30am to 4.00pm. Please be aware that you may need to leave a voicemail message, but we aim to return your call within one working day.

If you are unable to understand this leaflet, please communicate with a member of staff.

For additional medical advice, if your symptoms or condition worsens:

Contact your GP

NHS 111:

Get help with your symptoms, NHS111:

Information to help you manage your health:

Telephone 111

<https://111.nhs.uk/>

www.nhs.uk

In an emergency telephone 999

Emergency Department (A&E)
Alexandra Hospital
Woodrow Drive
Redditch B98 7UB

Tel: 01527 512030

Minor Injury Unit
Kidderminster Hospital
Bewdley Road
Kidderminster DY11 6RJ

Tel: 01562 513039

Emergency Department (A&E)
Worcestershire Royal Hospital
Charles Hastings Way
Worcester WR5 1DD

Tel: 01905 760743