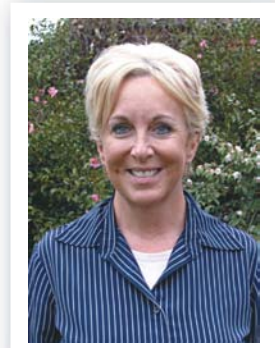


HELP! MY CHILD IS SICK AGAIN...



Contact for comments/information
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Little Feet Paediatric Clinic
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Children under the age of 10 years seem to get sick a lot, especially in the winter months. The immune system in children has not been exposed to many viruses and bacteria, therefore each time a child is exposed to a new “bug”, he has a good chance of becoming ill. Over time, the immune system will remember what the child has been ill with, and will protect them from developing the same illness over and over again. Children under the age of 6 years often develop 8-10 ‘colds’ each year. This can be quite frustrating for parents.

What can I do to help my child stay healthy?

Immunize your child.

Provide a healthy diet, with plenty of fruit and vegetables. Avoid sweets and lollies, limiting treats like that to once or twice a week.

Continue breast feeding if possible.

Avoid unnecessary contact with sick children (this is a tricky one - younger children are exposed to a wide array of illnesses from school aged siblings)

Don't expose children to cigarette smoke (second hand smoke can occur even if parents are going outside to smoke—smoke molecules remain on the skin).

Don't take your children to day care when they are sick.

Dress your children warmly.

Practice good handwashing, and teach your child to wash their hands after going to the toilet and before meals (this one is extremely important-many viruses and bacteria are passed from person to person by touching your hand to your nose or mouth).

If your child becomes ill, here are some things to be aware of. When the body is attacked by a virus or bacteria, the temperature will often go up. Normal temperature is 37 or below. Sick children can have temperatures as high as 40. A fever means there is an infection, but does not differentiate between a viral or bacterial cause. A fever is nature's way of destroying the 'bug', as most can't function efficiently in a hot environment. Most children that become ill have a virus.

Antibiotics don't work against viruses, so it is not necessary to give them in many cases. Most viruses last 7-10 days and can be treated with paracetamol and ibuprofen, along with lots of fluids and rest.

Little feet clinic is for children aged up to 11 years who are enrolled at Pukekohe Family Health Care. Parents can choose to have their child assessed by health professional Camille Davis MSN, BSN, RN, who has worked in Paediatrics for 25 years. Camille liaises closely with and has the support of the doctors at the practice at all times.

What can I do at home to help lower a high temperature?

Undress your child, and leave them in t-shirt and nappy or underpants.

Give your child lots of fluids - offer them at frequent and regular times.

Keep the environment cool - a child may feel chilled while they have a fever, but try not to let them cover up. This keeps the fever up.

A cool cloth on the forehead is helpful. It is not necessary to bathe the entire body.

Paracetamol can be given every 4 hours (not to exceed 4 doses in 24 hours). The dosage should be based on the child's weight. If the child is older than 6 months, ibuprofen can be given every 6 hours. Both of these medications can be purchased from the chemist, but should be given ONLY as directed as they can be quite dangerous if used incorrectly.

Don't hold your child in your lap, or sleep with them. Your body heat will help keep the temperature up.

Visit your doctor if your child:

Is unusually sleepy

Is fast breathing, or has difficulty breathing

Has a 'fit', or convulsion

Is refusing fluids, or has greatly decreased urine output

Is complaining of a sore neck or head (though children frequently have aches and pains with viral illnesses)

Has a rash you cannot identify

Is not improving after 48 hours