

# Winter Readiness







During the winter months, particularly those between Halloween and Christmas, it is usual to see an increase in infectious diseases. Young children and those with chronic illnesses are also at particular risk of developing complications from certain vaccine-preventable infections such as seasonal influenza (flu), COVID and Measles. The winter months also carry with them an increased risk of respiratory illnesses (scarlet fever) and stomach bugs (norovirus) which cannot be vaccinated against.

## Influenza (Flu) & COVID

**Flu and COVID are highly infectious and easily spread to other people.**

Both are spread by germs from coughs and sneezes, which can live on hands and surfaces for several hours.

To reduce the risk of spreading flu & COVID:

- wash your hands often with warm water and soap
- cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze
- bin used tissues as quickly as possible
- practice social distancing

Flu symptoms come on very quickly and can include:

- a sudden high temperature
- an aching body
- feeling tired or exhausted
- a dry cough
- a sore throat
- a headache
- difficulty sleeping
- loss of appetite
- diarrhoea or tummy pain
- feeling sick and being sick





## COVID

There is a continued risk of COVID as winter approaches. It is important for those who are eligible to receive the vaccination.

For more information see <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/coronavirus-vaccine/>

## How to treat your child if they have Influenza or COVID

**Antibiotics do NOT work against flu.**

For children in certain vulnerable groups antibiotic treatment may be indicated in the case of COVID. If your child falls into this group you will previously have received a letter advising you what steps to follow in order to get the treatment.

- Encourage your child to rest and sleep
- Keep your child warm
- Give paracetamol or Ibuprofen to treat the temperature and/or aches and pains (see product packaging for dosage instructions)
- Encourage your child to take plenty of fluids in order to avoid dehydration "any fluid is better than no fluid at all"

It is NOT necessary to see your GP unless

- Your child has a long-term medical condition, this includes conditions such as diabetes, asthma
- If your child has a weakened immune system due to certain medication or an existing health condition.



# Measles

**The first symptoms of measles are cold like and include:**

- a high temperature
- a runny or blocked nose
- sneezing
- a cough
- red, sore, watery eyes

These are followed by a rash a few days later.

The first step in preventing the spread of measles & flu in schools is to ensure that pupils and staff, where eligible, are immunised. The flu vaccine should be received every year as the active strains will change from year to year. Adults who are unsure if they are eligible can check using the following link

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/who-should-have-flu-vaccine/>

The MMR vaccination is a course of two vaccines given at 1 year and 3 years & 4 months of age. There is a catch-up campaign for anyone who has not previously received the vaccination. If you are unsure as to whether your child has received their vaccinations, you can check in their red books or with their GP practice. For further information please the link below

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/mmr-vaccine/>

## How to treat your child if they have Measles

- Encourage your child to rest and sleep
- Give paracetamol or Ibuprofen to treat the temperature and/or aches and pains (see product packaging for dosage instructions)
- Use cotton wool soaked in warm water to remove any crusts from your child's eyes.
- Try and avoid contact with babies and people who are either pregnant or have a weakened immune system



# Scarlet Fever

**Scarlet fever is a contagious infection that mostly affects young children and is easily treated with antibiotics.**

The first signs of scarlet fever can be flu-like symptoms

- including a high temperature,
- a sore throat
- swollen neck glands

Small, raised bumps appear on the chest and tummy 12-24 hours later, this then spreads. The rash feels rough, like sandpaper.

A white coating also appears on the tongue. This peels, leaving the tongue red, swollen and covered in little bumps (called "strawberry tongue").

The rash does not appear on the face, but the cheeks can look red. The redness may be harder to see on brown and black skin.

Any child with suspected Scarlet Fever should be seen by their GP.



## How to treat your child if they have Scarlet Fever

- Contact your GP for antibiotics and ensure that your child completes the full course of treatment.
- Offer cool fluid
- Offer soft foods if your child has a sore throat.
- Give paracetamol or Ibuprofen to treat the temperature and/or aches and pains (see product packaging for dosage instructions)
- Calamine lotion or anti histamines can be used to calm the itching.

# Norovirus

**Norovirus, also called the "winter vomiting bug", is a stomach bug that causes vomiting and diarrhoea.**

The main symptoms of norovirus are:

- feeling sick (nausea)
- diarrhoea
- being sick (vomiting)
- a high temperature
- a headache
- aching arms and legs

The symptoms start suddenly within 1 to 2 days of being infected and usually go away in about 2 days.

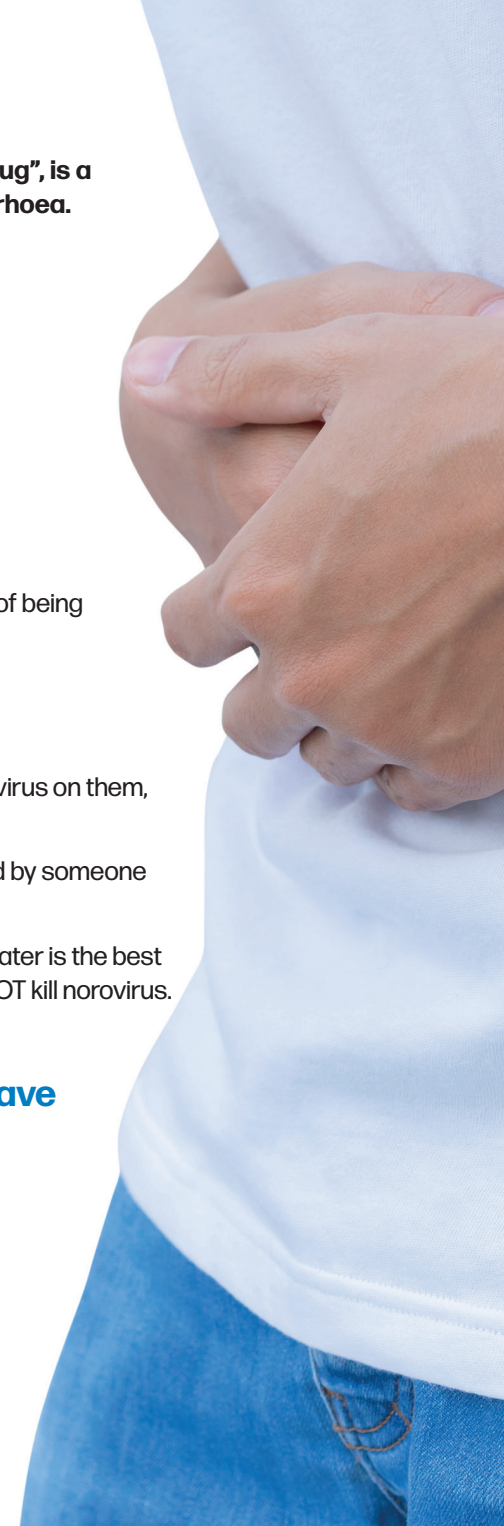
You can catch norovirus from:

- close contact with someone with norovirus
- touching surfaces or objects that have the virus on them, then touching your mouth
- eating food that's been prepared or handled by someone with norovirus

Washing your hands frequently with soap and water is the best way to stop it spreading. Alcohol hand gels do NOT kill norovirus.

## How to treat your child if they have Norovirus.

- Encourage rest
- Encourage fluids to prevent dehydration.





# Hand, Foot & Mouth

**This is NOT the same as foot & mouth disease that is found in animals.**

This is a common viral illness in childhood. It is spread by contact with the secretions of an infected person or by coughing and sneezing.

Symptoms are:

- Initially the individual may have a fever, reduced appetite and feel generally unwell.
- 1-2 days later a rash may develop, typically this is on the hands, feet, insides of their cheeks, gums and on the sides of their tongues.

## How to treat your child if they have Hand, Foot & Mouth

- Offer fluids to prevent dehydration – avoid acidic drinks, such as fruit juice
- Offer soft foods like yoghurt – avoid hot and spicy foods
- Give paracetamol or ibuprofen to help ease a sore mouth or throat
- A pharmacist may be able to advise about treatments such as mouth ulcer gels, sprays and mouthwashes to relieve the discomfort.

# Slapped Cheek

**Slapped cheek is common in children, it is transmitted by respiratory droplets. The child is infectious 3-5 days before the rash appears.**

Symptoms are a mild feverish illness followed by a rash. The rash is rose red and makes the cheeks appear bright red as if it has been slapped. The rash may be spread to other parts of the body but rarely involves the palms or soles.

The rash may reoccur for some months afterwards when the child is exposed to warm water, sunlight or heat.

## How to treat your child if they have Slapped Cheek

- Encourage your child to rest
- Encourage plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration – babies should continue their normal feeds

- Give paracetamol or ibuprofen for a high temperature, headaches or joint pain
- use moisturiser on itchy skin
- Speak to a pharmacist about itchy skin – they can recommend the best antihistamine for children

If your child has been in contact with any pregnant ladies in the run up to them developing a rash please let the lady know of your child's illness.

## How long should I keep my child at home for?

For **Flu** the child should remain at home until they are fully recovered.

For **Measles** the child can return to school 4 days after developing the rash providing that they feel well.

For **Scarlet Fever** the child should remain at home for at least 24 hours after starting the antibiotics.

For **Norovirus** the child should stay at home for 48 hours after their last episode of either diarrhoea and/or vomiting.

For **Hand, Foot & Mouth** your child should stay off nursery/school for as long as they are feeling unwell.

For **Slapped Cheek**, the contagious period is before the rash appears so there is no need to stay off school with the rash.

**Above all children & adults should be encouraged to wash their hands and use tissues if they have a cough or cold.**

### CATCH IT

Germs spread easily. Always carry tissues and use them to catch your cough or sneeze.



### BIN IT

Germs can live for several hours on tissues. Dispose of your tissue as soon as possible.



### KILL IT

Hands can transfer germs to every surface you touch. Clean your hands as soon as you can.



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