Coughing and wheezing in children
Coughing and wheezing in children

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Coughing and wheezing in babies can be distressing for you and your baby, but in most cases, symptoms can be relieved at home. Seek medical advice if symptoms are persistent or you are worried about your baby. Smoking in the home or car increases the risk of respiratory problems in babies.

Coughing and wheezing are common symptoms of childhood illness. They do not usually mean your child has a serious condition, although they can sound awful and may be distressing for you and your child. Coughing is a normal, healthy and important reflex that helps clear the airways in the throat and chest.

In most cases, you can relieve the symptoms of coughing and wheezing at home. However, your child may need urgent medical attention if the symptoms become more serious.

A child can stop breathing during a severe respiratory attack. If your child becomes distressed or their symptoms don’t settle, take them to your doctor or children’s hospital straight away.

If your child suddenly starts to cough without being unwell first, check whether they are choking. This requires immediate emergency treatment.

Smoking in the home or car increases the risk of respiratory problems in children.

### Causes of coughing and wheezing in children

There are different reasons why your child may cough or wheeze. Possible causes include:

- **colds** and other viruses – this is a very common cause of coughing
- **choking** – the coughing is sudden and the child has not been unwell
- **croup** – this tends to cause a barking, hoarse cough
- **bronchiolitis** – this is a chest infection, which can cause coughing and wheezing
- **smoke** – smoking around children can cause them to cough and should be avoided
- **hay fever** – this may be caused by dust mites, animal hair or moulds. As well as coughs, other symptoms may include sneezing and a runny nose
- **allergy** – this can cause coughing after exposure to specific substances
- **asthma** – coughing tends to be worse at night or after exercise. The child may also wheeze
- **whooping cough** – a contagious infection, which can be prevented by immunisation
- **pneumonia** – this causes a sudden onset of cough, high fever and fast breathing: it can be prevented by immunisation.

### Cough and wheezing are usually not asthma

Cough and wheezing are common when young children have colds and chest infections. It usually does not mean they have asthma. It is often difficult to tell whether very young children have asthma, as they have narrower airways and tend to get a lot of colds.

Most doctors do not diagnose asthma in babies until after 12 months of age, once the muscles around the airways in the lungs have matured. Sometimes, they may prescribe asthma medication before the baby is 12 months old, to see if the symptoms respond to that treatment.

### When to seek immediate medical help for coughing and wheezing in children

Children can stop breathing during a severe respiratory attack. If the coughing and wheezing don’t settle, or if your child becomes more distressed or unwell, take them to your doctor or children’s hospital straight away.

Seek immediate medical help if:

- your child is having difficulty breathing
- their breathing becomes rapid or irregular
- your child’s breathing is noisy when they are not crying
- their skin turns blue or they become very pale
- they seem unusually tired
- they have a temperature over 37°C
- they refuse food or drink
- your child suddenly starts to cough and has not been unwell – this may indicate that they are choking. Choking requires immediate emergency treatment.
Having something stuck in the nose can be another cause of breathing difficulty. Symptoms may include:

- a one-sided runny or blocked nose
- a whistling noise when breathing through the nose
- nose bleeds
- tenderness around the nose
- complaining about a strange smell that no one else can detect.

If you think your child may have something stuck in their nose take them to see a doctor.

**Non-urgent treatment for coughing and wheezing**

Generally, you can relieve mild coughing and wheezing at home. Usually, the coughing will clear up in a few days to a couple of weeks. If mild coughing goes on for three weeks, see your doctor.

Home care suggestions for mild coughing and wheezing in children include:

- comfort your child – try to keep your child calm. Having a cough and a noisy wheeze frightens children and breathing is more difficult when they are upset
- offer frequent drinks – drinking smaller amounts, but more often, may be easier if they are blocked up from a cold
- avoid smoking – smoking in the home or car increases the risk of respiratory problems in children.

Medicines such as antibiotics don’t help viral infections such as colds, flu, bronchiolitis or croup. ‘Over-the-counter’ cough medicines are not suitable for infants and young children without specific advice from your child’s doctor, as there is evidence that they may cause harm to some children and mask symptoms of more serious illness.

**Where to get help**

- In an emergency, call triple zero (000)
- Emergency department of your nearest hospital
- NURSE-ON-CALL Tel. 1300 606 024 – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)
- Maternal and Child Health Line Tel. 13 22 29 (24 hours)
- Asthma Australia Helpdesk Tel. 1800 278 462
- Your GP (doctor)
- Your local community health centre

**References**

- Asthma, 2018, Royal Children’s Hospital.
- Bronchiolitis (wheezing babies), Child and Youth Health, South Australian Government.

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Please note that we cannot answer personal medical queries. If you are looking for health or medical advice we recommend that you:

- talk to your doctor or pharmacist
- dial triple zero (000) in an emergency
- ring NURSE-ON-CALL Tel. 1300 60 60 24.

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More information

Infections

The following content is displayed as Tabs. Once you have activated a link navigate to the end of the list to view its associated content. The activated link is defined as Active Tab

- Infection explained
- Preventing infections
- Managing infections
- Childhood infections
- Animal to human infections
- A-Z of infectious disorders

Infection explained

- Antibiotic resistant bacteria
  Careful prescribing of antibiotics will minimise the emergence of antibiotic resistant strains of bacteria.

- Beat the Bite
  Beat the Bite is a Victorian government health campaign to highlight awareness of the risk of mosquito-borne diseases in Victoria. Find resources to be printed and shared along with videos that tell...

- Chest infections
  A chest infection affects your lungs, either in the larger airways (bronchitis) or in the smaller air sacs (pneumonia).

- Fever
  A mild fever up to 39°C can actually help the immune system to get rid of an infection...
• Immunisation history statements for children

By law, parents or guardians must provide an Immunisation History Statement when enrolling children in any childcare service, kindergarten or primary school in Victoria.

• Infection risk - cardiac surgery and mycobacteria

Mycobacterium chimaera is a type of bacterium known as a non-tuberculous mycobacterium (NTM). There is a risk that heater cooler units (HCUs) used in cardiac (heart) surgery may be contaminated with.

• Infections – bacterial and viral

Many bacterial infections can be treated with antibiotics, but they are useless against viral infections.

• Who provides immunisations in Victoria

Immunisations in Victoria are provided by local councils, GPs and specially qualified nurses in medical clinics and community health services, some Maternal and Child Health nurses, travel clinics and.

Preventing infections

• Antibacterial cleaning products

The Western obsession with cleanliness may be partly responsible for the increase in allergic asthma and conditions such as rhinitis.

• Beat the Bite! Mosquito-borne disease risk and management (video)

Dr Finn Romanes, public health doctor at Victoria’s Department of Health and Human Services explains the department’s program to monitor and manage the risks associated with Mosquitoes. Learn about the.

• Food safety while travelling

Travelling, eating and drinking go together but unfortunately, traveller’s diarrhoea and other food-related illnesses can sometimes come along for the ride.

• Handwashing - why it's important

Washing your hands with soap and warm water can help prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

• Home tattooing

Home tattooing, or getting tattoos overseas, puts you at risk of serious complications that can be debilitating and life-long.

• Immunisation history statements for children

By law, parents or guardians must provide an Immunisation History Statement when enrolling children in any childcare service, kindergarten or primary school in Victoria.

• Kissing and your health

While disease-causing bugs can be transferred during a kiss, most won’t cause disease and the risk of serious disease is very small.

• Personal hygiene

Good personal hygiene is one of the most effective ways to protect ourselves and others from illness.

• Pets – safe handling of reptiles and tropical fish

People in contact with tropical fish and reptiles such as turtles, lizards and snakes may be at risk of infections and illness due to germs (such as bacteria, viruses and parasites) carried on the.

• Piercings

If you want to have your body pierced, choose an experienced, registered practitioner to reduce the risks of infection and scarring.

• Preventing healthcare associated infection (HAI)

There are things you can do to reduce the chance of getting an infection while you are in hospital.

• Quarantine at home - coping tips

You may be asked to quarantine yourself at home if you have developed, or been exposed to, an infectious disease.

• Tattoos

If you want to get a tattoo, choose an experienced, registered practitioner to reduce the risks of infection and scarring.

• Time to immunise - free vaccines for men who have sex with men

Immunisation is one of the best ways you can protect yourself and others from infectious diseases in our community. In partnership with Thorne Harbour Health (formerly Victorian AIDS Council), the.

• Travel health and safety tips (slideshow)

betterhealth.vic.gov.au
We all love travelling to new and exotic places, but unfortunately illnesses and unforeseen events can ruin the trip of a lifetime. With a little effort, take a few of these simple precautions to make...

- **Travel immunisation**
  If you are travelling overseas, check with your doctor well in advance to find out what immunisations you need...

- **Vaccines**
  Vaccines trick the body into building immunity against infectious diseases without causing the actual disease...

- **Who provides immunisations in Victoria**
  Immunisations in Victoria are provided by local councils, GPs and specially qualified nurses in medical clinics and community health services, some Maternal and Child Health nurses, travel clinics and...

- **Workplace safety - infection control**
  The spread of many pathogens in the workplace can be prevented with regular hand washing...

**Managing infections**

- **Antibiotic resistant bacteria**
  Careful prescribing of antibiotics will minimise the emergence of antibiotic resistant strains of bacteria...

- **Handwashing - why it's important**
  Washing your hands with soap and warm water can help prevent the spread of infectious diseases...

- **Medicines and side effects**
  Complementary medicines can interact with pharmaceutical medicines...

- **Medicines - safety issues**
  Make sure your doctor knows about every medicine you take, including vitamins...

- **Preventing healthcare associated infection (HAI)**
  There are things you can do to reduce the chance of getting an infection while you are in hospital...

- **Quarantine at home - coping tips**
  You may be asked to quarantine yourself at home if you have developed, or been exposed to, an infectious disease...

- **Workplace safety - infection control**
  The spread of many pathogens in the workplace can be prevented with regular hand washing...

**Childhood infections**

- **Beat the Bite**
  Beat the Bite is a Victorian government health campaign to highlight awareness of the risk of mosquito-borne diseases in Victoria. Find resources to be printed and shared along with videos that tell...

- **Boils**
  Some areas of the body are more susceptible to boils, including the face, throat, armpits, groin and buttocks...

- **Chickenpox**
  Chickenpox is highly contagious, but it is generally mild and gets better without the need for special treatment...

- **Coughing and wheezing in children**
  Coughing and wheezing in babies can be distressing for you and your baby, but in most cases symptoms can be relieved at home...

- **Croup**
  Croup is a viral infection of the throat and windpipe that causes noisy breathing, a hoarse voice and a harsh, barking cough...

- **Diphtheria**
  Diphtheria is a serious bacterial disease that causes severe inflammation of the nose, throat and windpipe...

- **Fever - children**
  Fever is a way in which the body fights infection. A fever is not dangerous and does not always indicate a serious illness...
• Fever - febrile convulsions
  A febrile convulsion is a fit that occurs in children when they have a high fever...

• Gastroenteritis in children
  Gastroenteritis or Gastro can be dangerous for very young babies. Gastro is common in young children and spreads easily. Gastro is a bowel infection which causes diarrhea (runny or watery poo) and...

• Hand, foot and mouth disease
  Good personal hygiene is essential to prevent the spread of hand, foot and mouth disease to others, both for those infected and their carers...

• Impetigo - school sores
  Impetigo, or school sores, is a highly contagious skin infection that commonly affects school-aged children...

• Measles
  Measles can cause serious and sometimes fatal complications, including pneumonia and brain inflammation...

• Measles, mumps, rubella, varicella (chickenpox) – immunisation
  Immunisation is the best protection against measles, mumps, rubella and varicella (chickenpox)...

• Melissa's story (video)
  Melissa shares her story of how her baby caught chickenpox at 5 weeks old...

• Meningitis
  Meningitis can cause death and requires urgent medical attention...

• Middle ear infections
  Middle ear infections often happen during or after a child has a cold...

• Mumps
  Mumps is a viral illness that causes fever and swollen salivary glands, and a swollen face...

• Roseola infantum
  Roseola is a mild viral infection with associated fever and rash that affects babies and young children...

• Rubella
  Rubella is a mild illness for most people, but very dangerous for pregnant women and their babies...

• Slapped cheek disease
  Children with slapped cheek do not need to be kept home from school or day care, as cases are only contagious before the onset of the rash...

• Streptococcal infection - group B
  Group B streptococcal bacteria can cause a wide range of illnesses in susceptible people including newborns, the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions such as diabetes or cancer. Out...

• Viral encephalitis
  Viral encephalitis is inflammation of the brain caused by a virus and can cause permanent brain damage...

• Whooping cough
  The major symptom of whooping cough is a severe cough, which is often followed by a 'whooping' sound...

• Whooping cough – a family’s experience (video)
  A family shares their experience when their baby daughter contracted whooping cough (or pertussis)...

Animal to human infections

• Anthrax
  Anthrax is a rare but potentially fatal bacterial disease that occasionally infects humans...

• Australian bat lyssavirus (ABLV)
  The simplest form of prevention for lyssavirus is to avoid close contact with bats...

• Barmah Forest virus disease
Barmah Forest virus (BFV) disease can cause joint inflammation and pain, fatigue and a rash of variable appearance. A full recovery can be expected. Most people recover completely within six months.

- **Beat the Bite**
  
  Beat the Bite is a Victorian government health campaign to highlight awareness of the risk of mosquito-borne diseases in Victoria. Find resources to be printed and shared alone with videos that tell...

- **Beat the Bite! Mosquito-borne disease risk and management (video)**
  
  Dr Fini Romines, public health doctor at Victoria, Department of Health and Human Services explains the department’s program to monitor and manage the risks associated with Mosquitoes. Learn about the...

- **Bird flu (avian influenza)**
  
  The symptoms of bird flu in humans are similar to those of regular influenza...

- **Dengue virus disease**
  
  Dengue virus disease (dengue fever, or ‘dengue’) is a viral disease transmitted by mosquitoes in many tropical and subtropical parts of the world...

- **Hendra virus**
  
  The best defence against Hendra virus is to avoid contact with an infected horse...

- **Leptospirosis**
  
  Leptospirosis is a disease spread from animals to humans, caused by infection with the bacteria Leptospira...

- **Malaria**
  
  Travellers who visit malarial locations should avoid mosquito bites and take anti-malarial drugs...

- **Mosquitoes can carry diseases**
  
  You can reduce the risk of mosquito bites if you get rid of potential mosquito breeding sites around your home...

- **Murray Valley encephalitis**
  
  The only protection from Murray Valley encephalitis (MVE) is to avoid mosquito bites...

- **Pets – safe handling of reptiles and tropical fish**
  
  People in contact with tropical fish and reptiles such as turtles, lizards and snakes may be at risk of infections and illness due to germs (such as bacteria, viruses and parasites) carried on the...

- **Pinnworms**
  
  Despite the unsavoury reputation, a pinnworm infection (worms) is relatively harmless and easily treated...

- **Psittacosis - parrot fever**
  
  People who have birds as pets, poultry workers and anyone working in aviaries or pet shops, are most at risk of catching psittacosis...

- **Q fever**
  
  Q fever is caused by a micro-organism that can be carried by cattle, sheep and goats...

- **Ross River virus disease**
  
  Most people recover from Ross River virus disease, although some people have symptoms for a year or more..

- **Tapeworms and hydatid disease**
  
  It's important for your own health to control tapeworm infection in your dog...

- **Toxoplasmosis**
  
  Problems only occur if a woman becomes infected with parasites that cause toxoplasmosis for the first time while pregnant...

- **West Nile virus**
  
  All disease-carrying mosquitoes bread in water or require water to enable eggs to hatch...

- **Zika virus**
  
  Zika virus is a mosquito-borne virus. There is no cure, specific treatment or vaccine for Zika virus...

**A-Z of infectious disorders**

- **Anthrax**
Anthrax is a rare but potentially fatal bacterial disease that occasionally infects humans.

- **Aspergillus**
  Aspergillus is a fungus that commonly grows on rotting vegetation. It can cause asthma symptoms.

- **Australian bat lyssavirus (AHLV)**
  The simplest form of prevention for lyssavirus is to avoid close contact with bats.

- **Bacterial vaginosis**
  Bacterial vaginosis (BV) is caused by an imbalance of the bacteria normally present in the vagina.

- **Barmah Forest virus disease**
  Barmah Forest virus (BFV) disease can cause joint inflammation and pain, fatigue and a rash of variable appearance. A full recovery can be expected. Most people recover completely within six months.

- **Beat the Bite**
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- **Beat the Bite! Mosquito-borne disease risk and management (video)**
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- **Beat the Bite mosquitoes - learn how to beat the bite (video)**
  Hear from Victoria's Chief Health Officer talk about how you can protect yourself from mosquitoes this season.

- **Bird flu (avian influenza)**
  The symptoms of bird flu in humans are similar to those of regular influenza.

- **Bites and stings – first aid**
  If you are bitten or stung by an insect or animal, apply first aid and seek medical treatment as soon as possible.

- **Boils**
  Some areas of the body are more susceptible to boils, including the face, throat, armpits, groin and buttocks.

- **Botulism**
  Botulism is considered a medical emergency. If untreated, it may cause death.

- **Buruli ulcer**
  Since the ulcer gets bigger with time, early diagnosis and prompt treatment of Bairnsdale disease can keep skin loss to a minimum.

- **Candida auris (C. auris)**
  Candida is a genus of fungi (yeasts) that live on the skin and inside the human body. Candida auris (also called C. auris) is an uncommon fungus that can cause serious infections.

- **Cellulitis**
  Cellulitis is a bacterial infection of the skin that occurs most commonly on the lower legs and in areas where the skin is damaged or inflamed.

- **Chest infections**
  A chest infection affects your lungs, either in the larger airways (bronchitis) or in the smaller air sacs (pneumonia).

- **Chickenpox**
  Chickenpox is highly contagious, but it is generally mild and gets better without the need for special treatment.

- **Chlamydia**
  Chlamydia is often called the 'silent infection' because most people do not realise they have it.

- **Colds**
  Cold viruses are spread by sneezing, coughing and hand contact.

- **Cold sores**
  Cold sores are blisters around the mouth and nose, caused by the herpes simplex virus.

- **Coughing and wheezing in children**

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Coughing and wheezing in babies can be distressing for you and your baby, but in most cases symptoms can be relieved at home...

- **Croup**
  Croup is a viral infection of the throat and windpipe that causes noisy breathing, a hoarse voice and a harsh, barking cough...

- **Cystitis**
  Cystitis is the most common urinary tract infection in women...

- **Cytomegalovirus (CMV)**
  If an unborn baby gets CMV from their mother, it can cause hearing loss and intellectual disability...

- **Dengue virus disease**
  Dengue virus disease (dengue fever, or ‘dengue’) is a viral disease transmitted by mosquitoes in many tropical and subtropical parts of the world...

- **Diarrhoea**
  Acute diarrhoea in babies and young children can be life threatening...

- **Diphtheria**
  Diphtheria is a serious bacterial disease that causes severe inflammation of the nose, throat and windpipe...

- **Ebola virus disease (EVD)**
  Ebola virus is a rare disease that can cause severe symptoms and can be life-threatening...

- **Epididymitis**
  Epididymitis is an infection that causes inflammation of the epididymis...

- **Eyes - trachoma**
  A clean face and clean environment are the best protection against trachoma...

- **Fatigue fighting tips**
  Activity and nutrition help fight fatigue and put more energy into your daily life...

- **Fever - children**
  Fever is a way in which the body fights infection. A fever is not dangerous and does not always indicate a serious illness...

- **Fever - febrile convulsions**
  A febrile convulsion is a fit that occurs in children when they have a high fever...

- **Flu (influenza)**
  Influenza (the flu) is caused by a virus. The flu is more than just a bad cold and can occasionally lead to serious complications, including death. Specific antiviral medication is available. It is...

- **Food poisoning - listeria**
  Listeria infection is uncommon but very dangerous for the elderly, people whose immune systems are not working properly and pregnant women and their unborn babies...

- **Gastroenteritis**
  It is important to establish the cause of gastro, as different types of gastroenteritis respond to different treatments...

- **Gastroenteritis - amoebiasis**
  Amoebiasis can cause diarrhoea among travellers to developing countries...

- **Gastroenteritis - campylobacteriosis**
  Campylobacteriosis is a type of gastroenteritis and is more common in children under five years of age and young adults...

- **Gastroenteritis - cryptosporidiosis**
  Outbreaks of cryptosporidiosis have been associated with child care centres, public swimming pools and contaminated water supplies...

- **Gastroenteritis - giardiasis**
  Most people infected with Giardia parasites do not develop symptoms but can still spread the infection to others...

- **Gastroenteritis in children**

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betterhealth.vic.gov.au
Gastroenteritis or Gastro can be dangerous for very young babies. Gastro is common in young children and spreads easily. Gastro is a bowel infection which causes diarrhoea (runny or watery poo) and...

- **Gastroenteritis - salmonellosis**
  You may be more prone to salmonellosis if you are elderly, have another medical condition (such as a weakened immune system) or are malnourished...

- **Gastroenteritis - shigella**
  Outbreaks of shigella gastroenteritis can occur in institutional settings, particularly where children are still in nappies or adults are incontinent...

- **Genital herpes**
  Many people with genital herpes are not aware that they have the infection, because they have no symptoms...

- **Genital warts**
  Genital warts are one of the most common sexually transmissible infections...

- **Glandular fever**
  Glandular fever is most common among high school and university students, but young children can also become infected by saliva on toys, shared cups, or the hands of carers...

- **Gonorrhoea**
  Gonorrhoea, also spelt gonorrhea, affects both men and women and is transmitted during sex, it may lead to infertility in women if left untreated...

- **Haemolytic uraemic syndrome**
  Haemolytic uraemic syndrome (HUS) is a rare condition which can lead to chronic kidney damage or death from kidney failure...

- **Heart conditions - endocarditis**
  Endocarditis is an infection of the heart valves or the inner lining of the heart...

- **Hendra virus**
  The best defence against Hendra virus is to avoid contact with an infected horse...

- **Hepatitis**
  Hepatitis is an umbrella term for several diseases that affect the liver...

- **Hepatitis A**
  Immunisation is the best protection against hepatitis A infection and it is recommended for people in high-risk groups...

- **Hepatitis B**
  Hepatitis B is a viral infection that affects the liver and can lead to serious illness or death...

- **Hepatitis C**
  In Australia, hepatitis C is most often spread through the sharing of unsterile drug injecting equipment. New all oral combination treatment has greatly improved health outcomes for people with...

- **Hepatitis C Cure - what it means for Victorians (video)**
  Hepatitis C Cure - what it means for Victorians...

- **HIV**
  In Australia, HIV is most commonly spread when having sex without a condom and when sharing needles and other injecting equipment...

- **Impetigo - school sores**
  Impetigo, or school sores, is a highly contagious skin infection that commonly affects school-aged children...

- **Labyrinthitis and vestibular neuritis**
  Labyrinthitis and vestibular neuritis are disorders that result in inflammation of the inner ear and the nerve connecting the inner ear to the brain...

- **Legionnaires’ disease**
  Legionnaires’ disease is a rare form of pneumonia...

- **Leprosy (Hansen’s disease)**
  Once a person with leprosy begins treatment they quickly become non-infectious...

- **Leptospirosis**
• Leptospirosis is a disease spread from animals to humans, caused by infection with the bacteria Leptospira.

• Malaria
   Travellers who visit malarial locations should avoid mosquito bites and take anti-malarial drugs.

• Measles
   Measles can cause serious and sometimes fatal complications, including pneumonia and brain inflammation.

• Measles, mumps, rubella, varicella (chickenpox) – immunisation
   Immunisation is the best protection against measles, mumps, rubella and varicella (chickenpox).

• Meningitis
   Meningitis can cause death and requires urgent medical attention.

• Meningococcal disease
   Do not leave young adults alone if they suddenly develop a fever because they may become seriously ill very quickly.

• Molluscum contagiosum
   Molluscum contagiosum can be mistaken for genital warts or pimples, check with your doctor for an accurate diagnosis.

• Mosquitoes can carry diseases
   You can reduce the risk of mosquito bites if you get rid of potential mosquito breeding sites around your home.

• Mumps
   Mumps is a viral illness that causes fever and swollen salivary glands, and a swollen face.

• Murray Valley encephalitis
   The only protection from Murray Valley encephalitis (MVE) is to avoid mosquito bites.

• New drugs for the treatment of hepatitis C – Frequently Asked Questions for patients
   In Australia, hepatitis C is most often spread through the sharing of unsterile drug injecting equipment. New all oral combination treatment has greatly improved health outcomes for people with.

• Osteomyelitis
   Osteomyelitis means an infection of bone which can either be recent or longstanding.

• Parechovirus
   Good personal hygiene is essential to prevent the spread of parechovirus to others, both for those infected and their carers.

• Pericarditis
   Pericarditis symptoms may be similar to those of heart attack and include chest pain and abnormal heart rhythms.

• Pets – safe handling of reptiles and tropical fish
   People in contact with tropical fish and reptiles such as turtles, lizards and snakes may be at risk of infections and illness due to germs (such as bacteria, viruses and parasites) carried on the.

• Pinworms
   Despite the unsavoury reputation, a pinworm infection (worms) is relatively harmless and easily treated.

• Pleurisy
   Treating any infection of the upper respiratory tract quickly will reduce the risk of developing pleurisy.

• Pneumococcal disease
   Pneumococcal disease is a leading cause of serious illness and death in young children.

• Pneumonia
   Anyone can get pneumonia, but young children and the elderly are most susceptible.

• Polio and post-polio syndrome
   Polio is a serious disease that can cause life-threatening paralysis and possibly death.

• Psittacosis - parrot fever
   People who have birds as pets, poultry workers and anyone working in aviaries or pet shops, are most at risk of catching psittacosis.
- **Q fever**
  Q fever is caused by a micro-organism that can be carried by cattle, sheep and goats.

- **Reactive arthritis**
  Reactive arthritis is a form of arthritis that occurs as a result of some bacterial infections.

- **Rheumatic fever**
  Untreated rheumatic fever can lead to serious complications such as rheumatic heart disease.

- **Roseola infantum**
  Roseola is a mild viral infection with associated fever and rash that affects babies and young children.

- **Ross River virus disease**
  Most people recover from Ross River virus disease, although some people have symptoms for a year or more.

- **Rotavirus**
  Rotavirus is a common cause of viral gastroenteritis for Australian babies and preschool children.

- **Rubella**
  Rubella is a mild illness for most people, but very dangerous for pregnant women and their babies.

- **Salpingitis**
  Salpingitis is one of the most common causes of female infertility and may permanently damage the fallopian tubes.

- **Septicaemia**
  Bacteria in the bowels, urinary tract, mouth and skin can cause disease if they get into the bloodstream.

- **Shiga toxin-producing E.coli**
  There are many types of E.coli bacteria, most of which are harmless. However, some types of E.coli produce toxins (poisons) that can cause gastroenteritis (gastro). One of these types of E.coli is...

- **Shingles**
  Shingles is caused by the same virus responsible for chickenpox.

- **Slapped cheek disease**
  Children with slapped cheek do not need to be kept home from school or day care, as cases are only contagious before the onset of the rash.

- **Smallpox**
  Smallpox was once a feared and highly contagious viral disease.

- **Staphylococcus aureus - golden staph**
  Hospital patients are more likely to be infected by golden staph because of surgical or other wounds.

- **Streptococcal infection - group A**
  Streptococcal infection - group A can cause sore throats (pharyngitis), scarlet fever or impetigo (school sores).

- **Streptococcal infection – group B**
  Group B streptococcal bacteria can cause a wide range of illnesses in susceptible people including newborns, the elderly and those with pre-existing medical conditions such as diabetes or cancer. Out...

- **Styes**
  Styes may be red and sore, but they generally do not cause any damage to the eye or eyelids.

- **Swimmer’s ear**
  Swimmer's ear can be triggered by exposure to water or mechanical damage due to overzealous cleaning.

- **Tapeworms and hydatid disease**
  It's important for your own health to control tapeworm infection in your dog.

- **Tetanus**
  Tetanus is a life-threatening disease and immunisation is the best way to reduce your risk.
Time to immunise - free vaccines for men who have sex with men
Immunisation is one of the best ways you can protect yourself and others from infectious diseases in our community. In partnership with Thorne Harbour Health (formerly Victorian AIDS Council), the...

Tinea
Tinea is contagious and can be spread by skin-to-skin contact or indirectly through towels, clothes or floors.

Toxic shock syndrome (TSS)
If you think you could have toxic shock syndrome, stop using tampons immediately and go to the emergency department of your nearest hospital.

Toxoplasmosis
Problems only occur if a woman becomes infected with parasites that cause toxoplasmosis for the first time while pregnant.

Travel health - yellow fever immunisation
If you are travelling or passing through areas infected with yellow fever, some countries require you to be vaccinated.

Tuberculosis (TB)
Tuberculosis is spread when a person with an active infection coughs, laughs, sings or sneezes.

Urinary tract infections (UTI)
Urinary tract infections (UTIs) can target the urethra, bladder or kidneys.

Vaginal thrush
Vaginal thrush is a common infection caused by an overgrowth of yeasts in the vagina.

Viral encephalitis
Viral encephalitis is inflammation of the brain caused by a virus and can cause permanent brain damage.

Viral haemorrhagic fever
Viral haemorrhagic fever (VHF) is an extremely infectious and life threatening disease caused by a group of viruses, including the Ebola virus.

Warts
Warts can be stubborn, so you may need to use more than one type of treatment.

West Nile virus
All disease-carrying mosquitoes breed in water or require water to enable eggs to hatch.

Whooping cough
The major symptom of whooping cough is a severe cough, which is often followed by a 'whooping' sound.

Whooping cough – a family’s experience (video)
A family shares their experience when their baby daughter contracted whooping cough (or pertussis).

Williams syndrome
Williams syndrome often goes undiagnosed, which means that some people with the disorder fail to get the support and treatment they need until later in life.

Zika virus
Zika virus is a mosquito-borne virus. There is no cure, specific treatment or vaccine for Zika virus.

Related Information

Flu (influenza)
Influenza (the flu) is caused by a virus. The flu is more than just a bad cold and can occasionally lead to serious complications, including death. Specific antiviral medication is available. It is...

Bird flu (avian influenza)
The symptoms of bird flu in humans are similar to those of regular influenza.

Asthma explained
Asthma cannot be cured, but with good management people with asthma can lead normal, active lives.

No Jab No Play
No Jab No Play – from 1 January 2016, all parents/guardians seeking to enrol their child at an early childhood service in Victoria must provide evidence that the child is fully immunised for their age...

- A Healthy Start to School

A Healthy Start to School – a guide for parents of children in their foundation year of school...

Related information on other websites

- KidsHealth
- Royal Children’s Hospital Melbourne.

Content Partner

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by: Better Health Channel - (need new cp)

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