

CHILDREN
WITH

a virus infection



Children with a virus infection

General information:

A virus infection or fever with an unknown cause is the term doctors use when a child has an influenza-like illness without any signs of infection in the ears, throat, lungs, etc. This term covers very mild cases to serious infections that affect the child's general condition. The severity of symptoms differs from child to child. Children under six months do not necessarily run a fever.

It is rarely possible to identify the exact virus, and this is not important for the treatment. Once the child has been infected, it usually takes 2-7 days for the symptoms to appear. Although the worst symptoms usually disappear after 3-5 days, the illness may last up to a week.

How is it contracted?

Common to all viruses is that they spread by close contact. Viruses are present in the child's mucus/snot and spittle, and children are infected when they breathe in small droplets from coughing or sneezing and from having been in contact with hands or, for example, toys that are contaminated with spittle or snot.

Symptoms:

- Fever
- Irritability
- Headache
- Aching muscles and joints
- Loss of appetite
- Tiredness and weakness
- Runny nose
- Sore throat
- Possibly coughing and restless sleep
- Possibly earache
- Stomach ache, sometimes accompanied by vomiting and/or diarrhoea

Good advice:

- Good hygiene. Wash your hands often – also your child's hands. Use disposable tissues and wash toys, etc., if they are contaminated with snot

- If your child runs a fever, it must be able to get rid of the heat. It is often enough to dress the child in underwear and ankle socks. Use a sheet or duvet cover instead of a duvet
- The child is better able to breathe if its head is elevated when sleeping. Also, it helps to loosen the mucus if the child changes position now and again, sleeps on both sides, sits up, moves around/ plays as much as possible
- Offer the child plenty to drink. This loosens the mucus and makes it easier to cough it up
- As long as the child does not run a fever, it may play outside if adequately dressed. The child may also sleep outside in a pram as long as you keep a close watch on it
- Avoid exposing the child to passive smoking. Tobacco smoke increases the risk of irritation of the airways and increases the frequency of infections.

When to see a doctor?

Contact a doctor if the child:

- seems weak and is difficult to get into contact with
- cannot pee and refuses to drink
- runs a high fever for several days
- has a rash which does not disappear when you press on it
- makes you worry and you feel insecure

Contact your general practitioner first because he/she knows your child better than the doctor on call. You can also get good advice and guidance from your health visitor.

Treatment:

There is no treatment for most virus infections. The only thing you can do is to relieve the symptoms and observe the child.

If the child is in pain and/or refuses to drink, you may give it painkillers as agreed with a doctor.

Prevention:

Prevention is difficult, because virus is spread when many children are in close contact.

- It is important to wash your hands after having been in contact with a sick child.

Generally, it is important for both adults and children to wash their hands often, as this has been shown to reduce the risk of infection.

Childcare:

The child can return to childcare when the fever has gone and the child feels well enough to play with other children.

Parental guidelines

These guidelines have been prepared by a working group set up by the departments of paediatrics in Herning, Randers, Skejby and Viborg.

The intention with these guidelines is to provide parents with advice across the following sectors: health visitors, general practitioners family doctors, doctors on call, and the staff at paediatric admission wards in the Central Denmark Region.

The parental guidelines can be seen and downloaded from the internet on the web site www.fv.rm.dk

You may order additional copies from Rikke Dalsgaard,
Koncern Kvalitet, Central Denmark Region,
Skottenborg 26, 8800 Viborg. rikke.dalsgaard@stab.rm.dk

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