

Self-Care Week

14th - 20th November

Self-Care Tips for Parents and Kids

Self Care Week is an annual national awareness week that focuses on embedding support for self-care across communities, families and generations.

What is Self-Care?

Self-care describes a person's responsibility for actions that support them to live a healthy life, e.g. taking regular exercise and treating minor illness with over the counter medication.

Coughs

Coughs can be **short term/acute** (less than 3 weeks) or **persistent/chronic**.

Acute coughs are commonly caused by upper respiratory tract infections (e.g. colds). Other causes in adults and children include pneumonia, allergy, flare up of a long-term condition (e.g. asthma) and inhaled dust or smoke. Sometimes a short-term cough is the first sign of a health condition that causes a persistent cough.

Some causes that are more common in children are: bronchiolitis, croup, and whooping cough.

Mild acute coughs are usually caused by a virus and will resolve on their own; they will not get better any quicker with antibiotics.

Some tips to help you or your child feel better:

- Get lots of **rest**
- Drink plenty of **fluids**
- Drink warm **honey and lemon** (don't give honey to children under 1 year)
- Take **paracetamol** or **ibuprofen** to help with some of the symptoms that can accompany a cough (e.g. sore throat, fever). There are child versions available.

Chronic coughs are commonly caused by long-term respiratory tract infections (e.g. chronic bronchitis), asthma, allergy, smoking, medication (e.g. an ACE inhibitor for blood pressure), post-nasal drip (mucus dripping down the back of the throat), reflux and bronchiectasis (airways of the lung become abnormally widened).

You should see your GP if:

- You've had a cough for **more than three weeks**
- Your cough is particularly **severe** or is **getting worse**
- You cough up **blood**, feel **short of breath**, have **difficulty breathing** or have **chest and/or shoulder pain**
- You have any other worrying symptoms, such as **unexplained weight loss**, a **persistent change in your voice**, or **lumps or swellings in your neck**

Fever in Children

Fever in a child is a temperature of more than **37.5°C**. It is very common and normally clears by itself.

Common causes are:

Upper respiratory tract infections, flu, ear infections, tonsillitis, kidney or urinary tract infections and common childhood illness such as chicken pox and whooping cough.

Sometimes fever is associated with serious signs and symptoms such as breathlessness, vomiting, rash or seizures.

Serious causes include:

Meningitis, septicaemia and pneumonia.

If your child has a fever:

Keep them **hydrated** with cool water or milk.

If it is warm **open a window** or cover them with a **lightweight sheet** to keep them comfortable.

Ensure they are still **appropriately dressed** for the environment

Give them **paracetamol or ibuprofen** to bring down the fever, but only if they are distressed.

You should seek urgent medical advice if:

Your child is less than **3 months** old and has a temperature of **38 or above**.

OR

Your child is **3 to 6 months** old and has a temperature of **39 or above**.

OR

Your child shows other signs of being unwell such as **persistent vomiting, not feeding, floppiness or drowsiness**.

Flu Vaccines

Flu vaccination is available on the NHS to help protect adults and children at risk of flu and its potential complications, such as pneumonia.

The flu vaccine is recommended for:

- Anyone aged **65 and over**
- **Pregnant women**
- Children and adults with an **underlying health condition** (particularly long-term heart or respiratory disease)
- Children and adults with **weakened immune systems**

Attend your GP or participating pharmacy to get the vaccination for you and your child.

Antibiotic Resistance

Antibiotics are needed to treat bacterial infections. However bacteria are able to adapt and survive the effects of antibiotics, meaning that antibiotics are becoming less effective. This is known as antibiotic resistance.

Antibiotic resistance can lead to longer hospital stays, difficulty treating some infections (e.g. pneumonia) and potentially death.

It is therefore important that you:

- Take them **as prescribed**. Don't stop early, even if you feel better
- **Do not skip** doses
- Take them at **regular intervals**
- **Do not save** some for later
- **Do not share** them with others

Sources

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<http://www.selfcareforum.org/>

<http://www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/arc/pages/aboutarc.aspx>

<http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cough/pages/introduction.aspx>

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/vaccinations/Pages/flu-influenza-vaccine.aspx>