This guidebook has been written by family doctors and other health professionals to help you cope with minor health problems that affect us all from time to time.

Many minor illnesses are caused by viruses for which there is no cure. However, you can help yourself feel more comfortable by treating and relieving the symptoms until your own natural defences kill off the germs. While there are things that you can do to look after yourself you should not hesitate to call your doctor for advice if you are worried about your illness or symptoms continue.

You can save your own time - and your GP’s - by phoning your surgery for advice about whether you should see a doctor. Remember there are other health staff who may be able to help you with minor health problems, for example practice nurses and health visitors and your local pharmacist.
ASK YOUR PHARMACIST

For many minor illnesses your local chemist is the best place to start. Treatments to help you could be available over the counter and may be cheaper than the cost of a prescription! Pharmacists can advise about medicines and treatments available and how to use them properly. They can also advise you about preventing illness and ways to stay healthy.

They may ask you some questions about your health to help recommend appropriate treatment. For example, how long you have had the problem, whether you are already taking medicines, and whether you have other health problems. A pharmacist will also be able to advise if you should see a doctor.

Some pharmacies open for additional hours in the evenings and on Sundays. Details are given in local newspapers. If your prescription is ‘urgent’ and there is no pharmacy open, the doctor can arrange for a pharmacist to provide your medicine.

ADVICE ON MEDICINES

- Aspirin should not be given to children
- Always follow the instructions on how to take your medicines
- Antibiotics can take up to 48 hours to start working
- Never give medicines intended for you to someone else
- Check your medicines regularly to make sure they are safe to use. If they are out of date, the pharmacist can advise
- Make sure that medicines are stored in a cool place
- If you are already taking medicines, taking more or stopping for advice
- Check with the pharmacist if you should take any other medicines
- Always keep a list of your medicines with you
YOUR MEDICINE CABINET

A properly stocked medicine cabinet will help you deal with minor illnesses and injuries.
Get into the habit of regularly checking your medicine cabinet to ensure it remains safe, up to date and uncluttered.

The following should be essentials for your medicine cabinet:

**FIRST AID KIT**
- First Aid book
- Emergency telephone numbers
- Antiseptic liquid or wipes
- Box of assorted plasters
- Non-adherent dressings
- Non-allergenic adhesive tape
- Skin closure strips
- First Aid scissors
- Large sterile/triangular bandage
- First Aid tweezers
- Elasticated support bandages
- Cold/hot pack
- Gauze pads for dressing
- Medical thermometer.

**MEDICINES**

*Treatment for:*
- Pain (including paracetamol syrup for children) **do not give aspirin to children under 12 years old**
- Cold and sore throat
- Cough (home made honey and lemon drink will do)
- Indigestion
- Diarrhoea
- Sting and insect bite.

**under 12 years old**

Take, or use, medicines very carefully, and keep to the stated dose. The course should always be completed to prevent further illnesses. Someone else even if they have the same illness as you, or they’re not out of date. If you’re not sure, take them to the pharmacy to check if they are still working. The pharmacist will be happy to dispose of them for you.

Store dry place, well away from children. Others in addition may cause complications. If in doubt ask the pharmacist or contact the

void alcohol or certain foods whilst following a course of treatment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disease</th>
<th>Incubation Time</th>
<th>Infectious Time</th>
<th>Symptoms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chicken Pox</strong></td>
<td>13 - 17 days.</td>
<td>The day before the rash appears until the spots are dry. Length of time will vary.</td>
<td>Feeling unwell, spots becoming red and sore within a couple of days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Measles</strong></td>
<td>7 - 18 days.</td>
<td>A few days before the rash appears until 5 days after it disappears.</td>
<td>Like a bad cold, red blotchy rash appears on one or both cheeks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mumps</strong></td>
<td>12 - 25 days.</td>
<td>A few days before swelling until 10 days after it disappears.</td>
<td>Child unwell, red swelling under the jaw, possible disc in front.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rubella (German Measles)</strong></td>
<td>14 - 23 days.</td>
<td>A week before becoming ill until 4 days after the rash first appears.</td>
<td>Begins like a mumps rash but with a pinkish rash on the throat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Whooping Cough</strong></td>
<td>7 - 10 days.</td>
<td>A week before the first signs of illness until about 3 weeks later, unless an antibiotic given.</td>
<td>Cough getting worse, coughing becomes more difficult &amp; child is very unwell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hand Foot and Mouth</strong></td>
<td>3 - 5 days.</td>
<td>5 days before the rash appears.</td>
<td>Tiny blisters on hands, feet, arms and mouth, child unwell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISEASE &amp; SIGNS</td>
<td>WHAT TO DO</td>
<td>KEEP AWAY FROM SCHOOL/NURSERY?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It: rash of raised red fluid filled blisters spread over body</td>
<td>Paracetamol syrup and plenty of fluids; calamine lotion to relieve itching; No need to see GP unless child is very unwell, for example coughing, ear ache. Pregnant women coming into contact with chicken pox should contact the doctor.</td>
<td>At least 5 days after spots first appear or until spots become dry.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Id and cough with a fever present on 3rd or 4th day: swelling of glands sides of the face, just it of the ears.</td>
<td>Can be avoided by immunisation. Warm drinks. Vaseline around mouth to protect skin; wash eyelids with warm water. Paracetamol Syrup. Consult your doctor.</td>
<td>Until well.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Followed by swelling and up to the ear on both sides of the face. Easiest to eat when eating colds off after about a week.</td>
<td>Paracetamol syrup and plenty of drinks. Rest. No need to see the doctor unless child is in pain.</td>
<td>Until swelling has reduced.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild cold, followed by fine small spots often on face.</td>
<td>Keep away from pregnant women; Treat any fever. No need to see a doctor unless the diagnosis is in doubt or the rash lasts longer than 3 days.</td>
<td>For 7 days after rash has shown.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse, after 2 weeks severe make breathing difficult when whooping.</td>
<td>Best avoided by immunisation. See your doctor for advice. Seek advice from surgery if cough gets worse.</td>
<td>For 3 weeks from first signs. If treated with antibiotic can return during an outbreak under 5’s should not go to school unless immunised.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In palms, soles of feet in mouth slightly not very ill.</td>
<td>Plenty of fluids. Paracetamol syrup. Calamine lotion to relieve itching.</td>
<td>When free of aches and pains. The rash may last for a week or more.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TEMPERATURE & FEVER - HOW TO TREAT

It is very common for the temperature to rise with minor illnesses. Normal body temperature taken under the tongue is about 37°C/98.4°F. Under the arm it is a little lower - 36.4°C/97.4°F.

To lower a temperature:
- Give children paracetamol syrup. Adults can take paracetamol tablets or aspirin
- Sponge with tepid or lukewarm water and let the skin dry by itself
- Drink plenty of cool fluids (children may need to be persuaded to keep drinking throughout the day)
- Keep fresh air circulating around the room
- Do not wrap up more than usual. Take off a layer of clothing, and wear very little in bed.

Contact the surgery for advice on patients of any age if:
- The patient is unusually sleepy, confused or vomiting often
- The patient cannot bear to look at bright lights
- There is stiffness in the neck, and pain on moving chin to chest
- The raised temperature does not settle, and the patient has recently visited a hot country
- The raised temperature does not go away in 2 days (children) or 3 days (adult)
- The raised temperature comes back again after a few days of feeling normal.
WARNING ON MENINGITIS

Meningitis means inflammation of the meninges, the brain lining. Although rare it is very serious and can be fatal. It can affect children and adults.

Urgent treatment with antibiotics is needed. If it is diagnosed early and treated promptly most people make a full recovery.

Recognising the signs
In its early stages, meningitis can look and feel like other illnesses such as flu, migraine and measles. Not all these symptoms will be present at one time and the illness can develop very quickly.

Signs to look out for are:

- High temperature/fever
- Severe, persistent headache and neck stiffness.
- Dislike of bright lights
- Joint pains
- Fever
- Drowsiness /foppliness
- Vomiting
- A rash which is usually red/purplish or blue and does not disappear for a few seconds when pressed.

In babies the rash may be the very last sign that occurs, look out for:

- Fever which can be accompanied by cold hands and feet
- Dislike of bright lights
- Refusing feeds or vomiting
- Bulging of the soft spot on top of a baby’s head (fontanelle)
- Irritable high pitched moaning cry or whimpering
- Difficulty waking/lethargy
- Pale/blotchy complexion
- Stiff, arched neck or arching of back.

If you think it could be meningitis seek medical help immediately. If there is any delay you should call an ambulance.

People living in the same house may also need treatment with antibiotics.