

Common childhood illnesses

The term "childhood illnesses" refers to infectious diseases that many people develop during childhood. They are caused by highly contagious viruses or bacteria. Despite their name, however, they can also occur for the first time in adulthood. Effective vaccines are now available for many of these infectious diseases. Other childhood illnesses cannot be prevented by vaccination but are generally mild and usually resolve on their own.



How can you best protect yourself and your child from infection?

Many infectious diseases are spread through direct contact or respiratory droplets. The best ways to prevent infection are:

- Vaccination in accordance with the Austrian Immunisation Schedule
- Regular handwashing
- Avoiding close contact with people who are unwell

What are common infectious diseases in children for which no vaccine is available?

Hand, foot and mouth disease

- This viral illness most commonly affects children under 10 years of age.
- It is characterised by a rash or blisters on the palms of the hands, the soles of the feet and inside the mouth.
- Other symptoms may include fever, loss of appetite and a sore throat.
- In most cases, the illness is mild and resolves on its own within 7 to 10 days.

Roseola

- This illness, caused by human herpesviruses, mainly affects babies and young children between 6 months and 3 years of age.
- It is characterised by the sudden onset of a high fever (above 39°C).
- Mild cold symptoms, an inflamed throat, abdominal pain, vomiting or diarrhoea may also occur.
- As the fever subsides after approximately 3 to 5 days, a rash may develop. This usually disappears again by the following day.
- In most cases, the infection is mild and resolves on its own after a few days.

Is your GP practice currently closed?

In most cases, it is enough to call when the practice next opens.

Not sure? Call 1450, the health advice helpline.

Further information and sources are available at
www.wobinichrichtig.at.



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Slapped cheek syndrome (fifth disease)

- This viral infection occurs mainly in children between 5 and 15 years of age.
- The illness often goes unnoticed or resembles a mild flu-like infection with fever, headache and general malaise.
- Around one-fifth of those affected develop a characteristic rash. This may appear as butterfly-shaped redness on the cheeks or ring-shaped red patches on the shoulders, upper arms, thighs and buttocks.
- The rash usually fades after 7 to 10 days and the illness resolves on its own.
- **WARNING:** In pregnant women, the infection can be life-threatening for the unborn baby!

What can you do to relieve your child's symptoms?

- Your child should avoid overexertion and rest as much as possible, ideally remaining in bed.
- Your child should drink plenty of fluids, particularly water or unsweetened tea (approximately 50–80 millilitres per kilogram of body weight per day).
- If blisters are present in the mouth, cool drinks and yoghurt may help. Avoid acidic drinks such as fruit juices, as well as hot and spicy foods.
- If the skin becomes dry or flaky while a rash is healing, child-friendly skincare products may help.
- For severe sore throats, the following additional advice may be helpful: *See "Sore Throat in Adults and Children"*
- For vomiting or diarrhoea, the following additional advice may be helpful: *See "Vomiting in Young Children", See "Diarrhoea (NEW)"*
- For a high fever, the following additional advice may be helpful: *See "Fever in Children"*
- Pain-relieving or fever-reducing medicines may help, but should always be given only after consultation with your GP or paediatrician.

When should you seek medical advice?

Please contact your GP or your child's paediatrician in the following circumstances:

- For babies in the first few months of life or children with underlying medical conditions.
- If symptoms do not improve after a few days.
- If you are pregnant and have been in contact with an infected person, particularly in cases of **Slapped cheek syndrome (fifth disease)**.

When should you seek immediate medical attention?

Seek immediate medical attention:

- If your child refuses food or fluids.
- If there are signs of dehydration.
- If your child experiences a febrile seizure.

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Sources:

<https://www.gesundheit.gv.at/krankheiten/kinderkrankheiten.html>

<https://www.infektionsschutz.de>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions>,

<https://www.msdmanuals.com/de/heim/gesundheitsprobleme-von-kindern/h%C3%A4ufige-virusinfektionen-bei-s%C3%A4uglingen-und-kindern>

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