



## SELF HELP

### A Healthy Diet

Steps to a healthier diet: Eat plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. Cut down on your fat intake by eating lean meats and using low fat spreads or cooking oils. Choose wholemeal bread instead of white. Try nuts and dried fruit instead of sweets and chocolate. Drink at least two pints of water a day. Cut down on your salt intake and try not to overcook vegetables as it causes a massive loss of minerals and vitamins.

### Alcohol

In small quantities alcohol can be beneficial to health but you should be aware of the safe limits per week. Men can have up to 28 units and women are allowed up to 21 units per week spread over the course of that time. When you are consuming alcohol try to drink plenty of water to help your body deal with the effects of alcohol consumption

### *Back Pain*

The majority of back pain is not caused by anything serious. It is recommended that painkillers are taken and to remain as active as possible. Only if the pain is severe should you lie down for a day or 2. Too much rest is bad for your back. Gently build up your activities over several days. The sooner you can get back to normal activities the better. If the back pain does not start to improve within a few days seek medical advice.

### Bedsores

Bedsores are far easier to prevent than cure. They are caused by prolonged pressure to certain parts of the body when lying in bed for long periods. They can be prevented by encouraging the patient to shift position as often as possible. Take care to smooth out creases in the bottom sheet to avoid irritation. If red marks appear at pressure points such as the heels, elbows, buttocks and hips, inform the doctor before they get worse.

### Burns and Scalds

Apply large quantities of cold water to the affected area as soon as possible and maintain this until the pain subsides. This may take as long as 15 minutes! If the skin is unbroken but blistered, apply a loose, dry dressing. If the burn is larger than 4 or 5 inches in diameter or if the skin is broken, seek medical advice as soon as possible.

### Chickenpox

Rash appears as small red patches with small blisters in the centre. During the next 3 or 4 days, further patches will appear and the earlier ones will turn crusty and fall off. The rash is itchy and fever may **occur**. Calamine lotion and Paracetamol will give relief.



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## Child with a Temperature

If your child feels hot and is generally unwell it is important to get the temperature down. Give some Paracetamol (Calpol or Disprol); Junifen may also be given if your child is not asthmatic. Give the higher recommended dose for the age. Dress the child in cool clothes. Do not make the room too warm, open the window and turn down the fire. If the child seems very hot, sponge them down using tepid water. Give the child plenty of cool drinks. Repeat the Paracetamol every 4 hours up to 4 times a day. A child with a fever is likely to be restless at night. Offer cool drinks and sponge them down if they wake. If the child does not improve they should be seen by a doctor. It will not make the child worse to take them out in a pram to see the doctor – indeed fresh air may well help. Very rarely, a child under 5 years will have a convulsion with a high temperature. They will shake all over and become very still. It usually subsides in less than 5 minutes. Lay the child on their side and stay with them while it lasts. If there is another adult in the house, ask them to phone a doctor. If not, call when the convulsion has passed.

## Child with Diarrhoea

This usually settles within a few days. It is important to replace the water and salts lost by giving Dioralyte or Electrolade mixed with water. If the child vomits, wait and give them more liquid in small amounts to avoid making them sick. Give as much liquid as the child will take, too much will not harm them. The child should not have any solid food or milk for 24 hours. Breast-feeding should certainly be continued during any episode of diarrhoea. Most children with diarrhoea will not feel like eating and a few days without solids will do no harm. If the diarrhoea does not settle within a few days or if the child is weak or generally unwell, they should see a doctor. A doctor should see any baby under 6 months old with diarrhoea.



## Coping in hot weather

The following advice applies to everybody when it comes to keeping cool and comfortable and reducing health risks:

1. Shut windows and pull down the shades when it is hotter outside. If it's safe, open them for ventilation when it is cooler.
2. Avoid the heat: stay out of the sun and don't go out between 11am and 3pm (the hottest part of the day) if you're vulnerable to the effects of heat.
3. Keep rooms cool by using shades or reflective material outside the windows. If this isn't possible, use light-coloured curtains and keep them closed (metallic blinds and dark curtains can make the room hotter).
4. Have cool baths or showers, and splash yourself with cool water.
5. Drink cold drinks regularly, such as water and fruit juice. Avoid tea, coffee and alcohol.
6. Stay tuned to the weather forecast on the radio or TV, or at the Met Office website.
7. Plan ahead to make sure you have enough supplies, such as food, water and any medications you need.
8. Identify the coolest room in the house so you know where to go to keep cool.
9. Wear loose, cool clothing, and a hat if you go outdoors.
10. Check up on friends, relatives and neighbours who may be less able to look after themselves.



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## Coughs and Colds

There is no cure for the common cold! **Antibiotics have NO effect on colds or flu.** Paracetamol will ease a headache or sore throat or a fever. Decongestants and throat lozenges can also help to relieve symptoms. It is important to drink plenty of fluids. Dry coughs may be eased by steam inhalations or cough linctus, but you should see a doctor if the cough persists for more than 7 days or if the cough produces lots of green or yellow coloured phlegm, or if you cough up blood and the cough is accompanied by shortness of breath, chest pain or wheeze.

## Cystitis

This is an inflammation of the inside of the bladder, which causes you to pass urine at an increased rate with a burning sensation. On first noticing the symptoms drink a pint of water immediately. A teaspoon of Bicarbonate of Soda dissolved in the water can relieve some of the pain. Paracetamol may also ease the discomfort. It is important to carry on drinking plenty of fluids to wash the germs out of the bladder. If symptoms do not settle in a day, bring a sample of urine in the clean container to the surgery as an antibiotic may be needed.

## Diarrhoea & Vomiting in Adults

Usually settles within a few days. It is important to replace the fluid and salts lost by drinking plenty of clear fluids. Dioralyte or Electrolade can be purchased at the Chemist for this purpose. Most people do not feel like eating for a few days after this and going without food will do no harm. If you feel like eating then do so but avoid fatty foods as this can make the diarrhoea worse.

## Earache

Earache May be caused by excess earwax, catarrh or infection. If a child gets earaches, regular doses of Paracetamol e.g. Calpol will ease the discomfort. If the earache does not settle within 12 to 24 hours seek medical advice.

## Flu

This is an unpleasant illness characterised by high temperatures, aches and pains. The best treatment is plenty of rest and fluids with Paracetamol to relieve aches and temperature. Antibiotics have no effect. If you are elderly or have a chronic health problem (e.g. heart disease, chest disease or diabetes) we would recommend an annual flu jab.

## Gastroenteritis

This describes a group of diseases affecting the stomach or part of the intestine. Symptoms are often diarrhoea, sickness and stomach ache. Because the lining of the stomach is likely to be inflamed medicines are often immediately vomited up. Large quantities of water, orange juice or thin soup should be taken to counter effects of dehydration. Consult your GP if symptoms persist for more than a day or in the case of babies or your children, 6 hours.

## German measles (Rubella)

The rash appears during the first day and usually covers the body arms and legs in pink patches, 2-4mm. It is infectious from 2 days before the rash appears and up to about 7 days afterwards. It can be harmful to the unborn child, therefore it is important to inform all contacts in order that anyone who may be pregnant can contact their Doctor. All children should be immunised by the MMR vaccine at about 18 months.



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## Head Injury

If the patient was knocked out and can remember the accident, it is unlikely that serious injury has resulted, but if the patient was knocked unconscious and cannot remember what happened, he or she should be taken to a hospital A&E Department without delay. If any patient becomes drowsy or vomits following a head injury, seek medical advice.

## Head Lice

Contrary to popular belief head lice prefer clean hair and are, therefore, not a sign of poor personal hygiene. They are extremely contagious. Medicated head lotions, shampoos and creams are available from chemists without prescription. During an outbreak the whole family should be treated at the same time.

## Insect Bites and Stings

Antihistamine tablets can be obtained from the chemist without prescription and will usually relieve most symptoms. Bee Stings should be scraped away rather than “plucked” in order to avoid squeezing the contents of the venom sac into the wound.

## Measles

This usually causes high temperature, cough and sore eyes before the rash appears until about 10 days after that date. The rash is blotchy and red and appears on the face and body. It is contagious from 2 or 3 days before the rash appears until about ten days after that date. MMR can prevent this

## Minor Cuts and Grazes

Wash the wound thoroughly with water and a little soap. To stop the bleeding apply a clean handkerchief or dressing firmly to the wound for about 5 minutes. Cover with a clean dry dressing.

## Mumps

Painful swelling of the gland in front of one or both ears occurs. The patient is infectious from 2 or 3 days before swelling appears until about 8 to 10 days after that date

## Nose bleeds

Sit in a chair with your mouth open, leaning forward and pinch your nose just below the bone (bridge) for approximately 10 minutes and apply ice to the forehead. Avoid hot drinks or hot food for 24 hours. If symptoms persist seek medical advice.

## Smoking

Every cigarette you smoke can shorten your life by an average of five and a half minutes. Giving up smoking is all about motivation. Set a date in the future when you are going to stop and tell all your friends so that they can support you in your decision. When the big day comes plan carefully to keep yourself busy and try to avoid situations, which may tempt you into having a cigarette. You could put aside the money that you would spend and save up to treat yourself. If you have tried everything and still want to give up contact your doctor for extra help



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## Sore Throats

Majority of sore throats settle after a few days. Gargling with soluble Paracetamol and then swallowing may help ease symptoms – repeat this up to 4 times a day.

## Stomach Ache

Most attacks are not serious and are usually caused by indigestion or wind. A hot water bottle will often relieve the symptoms and, in the case of indigestion, a teaspoon of bicarbonate of soda in half a glass of water will help. If the pain lasts for longer than 8 hours or increases in intensity you should seek medical advice.

## Sunburn

Treat as for other burns with cold water. Oily Calamine lotion will relieve the irritation and Paracetamol may also help. Children are particularly susceptible to sunburn and great care should be taken to avoid over exposure to the harmful effects of the sun.

## Sprains

Apply a cold compress, containing ice if possible for 15 to 30 minutes to reduce the swelling. Apply a firm crepe bandage and give the sprain plenty of rest until all discomfort has subsided. Further strain will lead to further swelling and a longer recovery period.