

# Upper Respiratory Tract Infection (URTI)

**This leaflet offers information about URTI. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your child's care.**

## **What is an Upper Respiratory Tract Infection and why has my child got it?**

A URTI is a viral infection that can affect the nose, throat and sinuses. Upper respiratory tract infections are extremely common and there are many different viruses which cause them. Children are particularly susceptible to these and it is normal for children under five years old to have as many as twelve URTIs in one year. The frequency of these illnesses reduces as children get older – for example a child in primary school may get around six URTIs per year.

## **What are the signs and symptoms?**

A URTI has symptoms that are similar to the 'common cold'. Your child may have:

- A blocked or runny nose
- A cough
- A sore throat
- A temperature
- A reduced appetite
- Less energy than normal.

The symptoms usually start with clear mucous from the nose, which then becomes thicker and yellow/green. Your child may find it difficult to sleep because of their blocked nose.

The symptoms usually last for a few days and then start to get better. The cough is often the last symptom to go away and can last for two to three weeks after the other symptoms have settled. This is because the airways become swollen (inflamed) during the illness, which causes your child to cough. This swelling takes a couple of weeks to resolve.

### **What happens if my child does not get treatment?**

There is no specific treatment needed for upper respiratory tract infections but there are several things you can do to ease your child's symptoms while their own immune system fights the virus. Antibiotics do not help treat a URTI.

If your child has a high fever, is upset or in pain, you can give them paracetamol (Calpol) or ibuprofen (Nurofen). It is important to follow the manufacturer's dosing guidelines when using these. Ensure your child is drinking lots of fluid. Sugar free ice lollies are helpful if children are reluctant to drink.

For older children, throat lozenges can help relieve the symptoms of a sore throat. These can be bought in most pharmacies.

For babies, saline nose drops may help to ease a blocked nose, making sleeping and feeding a little easier. These can be bought from most pharmacies.

Vapour rubs can be used on a tissue or pillow to help ease a blocked nose. They can also be rubbed into your child's chest or back but avoid putting them directly on the area under the nose.

If you or anyone at home smokes, this can make the symptoms of URTIs last longer. Contact your GP or other smoking cessation services to try to stop smoking.

## When to seek help?

Most children will recover of their own accord without needing to see a doctor. You should ask for your child to be reviewed by a doctor if they:

- have a fever lasting more than five days
- are having difficulty breathing
- are very lethargic and irritable
- are not managing to drink enough fluid
- are less than three months old and have a fever above 38 degrees Celsius.

## Useful sources of information

NHS Smoke Free

<https://www.nhs.uk/smokefree>

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Emergency Department on 020 8725 2666 and ask to be put through to the Paediatric Emergency Department.

**For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit**

[www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)

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## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

## **NHS Choices**

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

## **NHS 111**

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111

## **AccessAble**

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website ([www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



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