



Help for common winter illnesses

As the colder months approach, common ailments like sore throats, earaches, and rashes often follow.

When these issues arise, it can be challenging to know where to seek help, especially if it's not an emergency. This leaflet offers practical tips and advice on how to manage these minor health concerns on your own.

Sore throat

Sore throats are very common and usually, nothing to worry about. They normally get better by themselves within a week.

To help soothe a sore throat and shorten how long it lasts, you can:

- gargle warm, salty water (children should not try this)
- drink plenty of water
- eat cool or soft foods
- avoid smoking or smoky places
- suck ice cubes, ice lollies or hard sweets – but do not give young children anything small and hard to suck because of the risk of choking
- try over-the-counter medicines like throat sprays or lozenges
- rest

Should your sore throat become worse, see your pharmacist or GP. But if you start to have trouble breathing or are unable to swallow, call 999 or go to A&E.



Earache

Earache and ear pain are common, particularly in young children. It can be painful but is not usually a sign of anything serious.

Do

- use painkillers, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen (some painkillers are not safe for everyone. Always check the leaflet or get medical advice before taking them)
- place a warm or cold flannel on the ear

Don't

- put anything inside your ear, such as cotton buds
- try to remove earwax
- let water get inside your ear



Rash

A skin rash occurs when the skin becomes red, inflamed and bumpy. Some skin rashes are dry and itchy. Some are painful. Many things can bring on a skin rash, including viruses, bacteria, allergens and skin conditions like eczema.

You might lower your chances of developing a skin rash if you:

- avoid known triggers, such as allergens and irritants
- don't share personal items or clothing with anyone who has a virus that causes a rash
- use mild, fragrance-free, hypoallergenic soaps, cleansers and moisturisers
- wash your hands immediately after coming into contact with a known allergen or irritant

Rashes in babies and children can also appear often, and they're normally nothing to worry about. But as a parent, you know if your child seems seriously unwell and should trust your judgment. If your child develops a rash along with other symptoms such as a stiff neck, high temperature, or difficulty breathing, call 999 or go to A&E.

Further help

Scan the QR code for an A-Z list of ailments.

If you have tried these self-help tips and still require medical advice, but it is not an emergency, please try one of the below:



Scan me

1. Pharmacy

Pharmacists are experts in medicines who can help you with minor health concerns. As qualified healthcare professionals, they can offer clinical advice and over-the-counter medicines for a range of minor illnesses, such as earache, colds, sore throats, rashes, tummy trouble and aches and pains. If you run out of prescription medicine and do not have a prescription, you can get an emergency supply from a pharmacy without a prescription. Take identification, an old prescription, or the medicine's packaging with you, if you have it.

2. NHS 111 online – 111.nhs.uk

Use the symptom checker, which can give you the right advice for your concerns. In some cases, 111 will be able to book an appointment for you at urgent treatment centres, GP surgeries or pharmacies. By using the online service, you'll answer the same questions as you would over the phone, but without the wait time. If you require help for a child below the age of five, always call 111.

3. GP appointment

GP practices are available to assist you, whether this is face-to-face, a telephone call, or a video consultation. Please contact your practice by telephone or online.

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