

## **When Should I Bring My Child to the Doctor?**

If your child has the signs and symptoms of infection that are listed below, you should bring your child immediately to the doctor.

Although some typical symptoms of illness differ depending on a child's age, some are the same for all children.

Whenever your child has a symptom that concerns you, you should not hesitate to call your child's doctor, even if the symptom does not appear on this list.

### **Signs and Symptoms - Birth to 3 Months**

- any change in the baby's color, especially paleness or bluish color around the mouth and in the face
- fever (rectal temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit) in any infant younger than 3 months should prompt a call to the doctor
- baby suddenly becomes "floppy" with loss of muscle tone, or becomes stiff
- one or both eyes are pink, bloodshot, have a sticky white discharge, or eyelashes that stick together
- diarrhea in newborns - more than six to eight watery stools per day (breast-fed newborns often have looser stools than formula-fed babies; check with your child's doctor for guidance)
- redness or tenderness around the navel area
- white patches in the mouth
- nose blocked by mucus so baby can't breathe while feeding
- forceful vomiting
- vomiting that lasts for 6 hours or more
- vomiting with fever and/or diarrhea
- baby stops feeding normally
- crying for an abnormally long time
- any blood in the stools

### **Signs and Symptoms - 3 Months to 1 Year**

- fever (rectal temperature of 101 degrees Fahrenheit in infants ages 3 to 6 months, and 104 degrees F in a child 6 months or older)
- baby refuses to eat and misses several feedings
- baby is unusually cranky and irritable or unusually sleepy
- any blood in the stools

### **Signs and Symptoms - Infant to Adolescent (All Ages)**

- high fever (The level of fever that is considered significant depends on the age of the child, the illness, and whether the child has other symptoms with the fever. See above.)
- chills that make the child shake all over
- loss of consciousness for any reason

- extreme sleepiness or unexplained lethargy
- unusual excitement or hysterical crying
- sudden weakness or paralysis of any part of the body
- seizures (convulsions) or uncontrollable shaking of an arm or leg
- severe headache
- pain, heaviness, or stuffiness around the nose, eyes, or forehead
- nasal fluid that is discolored, bad-smelling, or bloody
- sudden hearing loss
- earache
- fluid discharge from the ear
- sudden decrease in vision
- eyes that are red, swollen, and watery, with or without blurred vision
- eyes that are extremely sensitive to light, especially if your child also has a fever, headache, or stiff neck
- a yellow color in the whites of the eyes or in the skin, especially with pain in the abdomen and/or dark or tea-colored urine
- stiffness or pain in the neck, especially with fever or headache
- severe sore throat, especially with trouble swallowing or speaking
- uncontrolled drooling because of painful swallowing
- difficulty breathing, especially with pale or bluish color of the lips or nails
- unusually rapid breathing
- severe or persistent [cough](#), especially if it brings up bloody or discolored mucus
- vomiting for 12 hours or more
- vomiting of blood
- intense or unusual abdominal pain
- swollen or abnormally large abdomen
- diarrhea that is streaked with blood or mucus
- pain in the middle of the back, especially with fever or with discomfort while urinating
- painful or unusually frequent urination
- urine that is discolored, bloody, cloudy, or has an unusual smell
- discharge from the penis
- vaginal discharge that is thick and white, brown or discolored, or smells bad
- pain, redness, or swelling of a joint that can't be explained by exercise or injury
- a cut or scrape that oozes pus or becomes hot, red, tender, or swollen
- a sudden rash, or sudden crop of blotches or blisters, especially over a large area of the body

Originally reviewed by Dr. Steve Dowshen at  
[http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid\\_safe/emergencies/call\\_doc.html](http://kidshealth.org/parent/firstaid_safe/emergencies/call_doc.html).