



Lockwood Surgery

SELF TREATMENT OF COMMON ILLNESSES AND ACCIDENTS

LOCKWOOD SURGERY

Self Treatment of Common Illnesses and Accidents

Minor Illnesses Self Care

Many common complaints can be simply treated at home without the need to consult a doctor. Viral illnesses are unpleasant but usually self-limiting. You can prepare for minor illnesses by keeping a range of over the counter medicines at home. A well stocked medicine cupboard will help with many common health problems, such as

- Colds and flu
- Coughs
- Sore throats
- Indigestion
- Toothache
- Headaches
- Constipation
- D & V

If you have any children, do not forget to include appropriate medicines for them too.

Your local pharmacy is a good source of advice on the treatment of common illnesses and healthy living without the need to make an appointment.

Advice may also be obtained through NHS Choices at www.nhs.uk

Antibiotics

These commonly prescribed and powerful medicines only work on bacteria and are without effect on viruses. Unfortunately, this means that common infections like coughs, colds and flu etc, will not be helped by them at all. The correct treatment is to follow the simple remedies outlined below; antibiotics can be useful in bacterial infections, but even most bacterial infections are self-limiting and will get better on their own.

Colds

The common cold is mild, self limiting illness that is caused by a virus and will not respond to antibiotics. Most colds will improve after 2 – 5 days. Treatment usually consists of regular paracetamol or ibuprofen. Aspirin can be used as an alternative if a person is over 16 years old. This will help the fever and aches and pains. It is advisable to drink plenty of fluids and eat healthily whilst unwell.

Sore Throats

These are mostly caused by virus infections which antibiotics cannot cure. The throat will settle on its own but any fever or pain may be helped by taking paracetamol. Using soluble aspirin as a gargle may also be helpful in easing the discomfort from a sore throat. **CHILDREN UNDER 16 SHOULD NOT BE GIVEN ASPIRIN.** If your sore throat lasts longer than two weeks, if you have a high fever, if you have other serious illnesses or are taking steroids or immunosuppressant then see a doctor.

Coughs

There is little evidence to support the use of over the counter cough mixtures for the treatment of a cough, especially in the relief of chesty coughs. Coughs can be soothed by a drink made from honey and freshly squeezed lemon juice in hot water. If particularly irritating, steam inhalation may be worthwhile.

Flu

Flu is caused by a virus and is characterised by a high temperature, headache and generalised aches and pains in the limbs. There are many causes for these symptoms with the vast majority due to viruses and antibiotics are of no value in their treatment. People suffering from flu should drink plenty of fluids and take bed rest. Evidence suggests that ibuprofen or aspirin can be effective in the treatment of flu symptoms. Paracetamol is also useful in reducing fever. Aspirin should not be given to children under 16 years old.

Back Pain

Simple strains of the back caused by excessive strain, e.g lifting heavy weights or slipping whilst lifting can be treated by sitting upright with support for the small of the back and taking painkillers such as ibuprofen or Paracetamol. Ibuprofen will not only relieve the pain but will reduce inflammation in the muscles, ligaments or tendons which are causing it. Regular application of ice packs will help. It is important to remain mobile and do gentle stretchers.

Temperatures

Children often run temperatures with no other symptoms becoming feverish. Most infections are caused by viruses rather than bacteria and will not respond to antibiotics. When a child has a fever (body temperature over 37 degrees C)

- Give **REGULAR** Paracetamol liquid (e.g Calpol) as per directions on the packet
- Give plenty of cool liquids. Clear fluids are the best such as water or dilute squash. Give a small sip every 5 minutes.
- Dress the child in loose clothing and cool the room down. Try sponging with tepid water to cool the child down.

If your child is not improving or is particularly unwell please contact the surgery or emergency number outside surgery hours for them to see a Doctor.

Signs that a child needs to see a doctor

- The child is not drinking enough and is dehydrated
- The child has less wet nappies than usual
- The child is not interested in toys and playing or is floppy
- The child has a high pitched cry and cannot be settled
- The child has a rash that does not disappear when a glass is placed over it – Call 999 in this case to rule out meningitis

Minor cuts and grazes

Wash the wound thoroughly with water and a little soap. To stop bleeding apply a clean handkerchief or dressing firmly to the wound for approx 5 minutes. If necessary elevate the affected body part where possible to help stop excessive bleeding. Afterwards cover with a clean dry dressing.

Itching

Itching can be relieved by applying calamine lotion or taking an antihistamine tablet, e.g. cetirizine, loratadine or chlorpheniramine, obtainable from your local pharmacy. Chlorpheniramine is known to often cause drowsiness.

Sprains and Minor Injuries

Apply a cold compress containing ice (bag of frozen peas) for 15-30 minutes to reduce the swelling whilst elevating the limb. Take Paracetamol for the pain and rest the limb until the pain subsides.

Head Lice

Head lice have no preference for either clean or dirty hair. Use a medicated head lotion and fine comb for removal of the eggs and lice. Inspect all the family and treat only those infected. The local head lice scheme where treatment is available free to those people who do not pay for prescription is obtainable from your local pharmacy. It is most appropriate to seek advice from your pharmacist for head lice.

Sunburn

Care should be taken to minimise exposure to the sun particularly between 10.00am and 3.00pm.

Sun exposure should be avoided altogether in young children by using hats, avoiding full sunlight and using a high factor sun block. If all of this is too late, then plenty of fluids, a cool room and liberal moisturising cream applied to the affected area can relieve some of the discomfort.

Rashes

The majority of rashes are harmless. If the rash develops after starting new medication the medication should be stopped and a doctor contacted. If the patient is ill, medical help should be sought as soon as possible.

Nose Bleeds

These are less severe than they may look. Pinch the soft part of your nose firmly for at least 10 minutes while sitting up leaning forward. If it does not work repeat the process. Most will stop. Do not blow or rub your nose for at least 12 hours. If you experience a recurring nose bleeds please consult your doctor

Insect Bites/Stings

These are usually harmless, but can be painful. Remove the sting if it is still in you. If there is a lot of swelling especially around the mouth, advice should be sought otherwise consult your local pharmacist for advice.

Diarrhoea and Vomiting

Acute diarrhoea and vomiting in adults is usually a self-limiting condition and is often associated with abdominal pains which occur in spasms. The problem will usually resolve by avoiding food especially dairy products for at least 24 hours and taking frequent sips of clear fluids such as water to prevent dehydration.

Diarrhoea and vomiting in babies and toddlers requires closer observation. Consult the doctor of the baby or toddler continues to vomit for more than eight hours or is generally becoming weaker.

Chickenpox

The rash appears on the first day as small red patches approximately 3-4mm across. Within a few hours small blisters appear in the centre of these patches. During the next three to four days further blisters will appear scattered over the body and the earlier ones will turn crusty and fall off. Calamine lotion may be applied to soothe the itching which occurs with this. Antihistamines may also be useful.

The most infectious period is from two or three days before the rash appears and up to five days after the first spot appeared. Children may return to school as soon as the spots have crusted over. Avoid contact with pregnant women. Chickenpox does not respond to antibiotics and there is no need to seek a doctor unless the child is very unwell. Adults can get chickenpox, and treatment is the same for children. If you are immunosuppressed and get chickenpox you should seek medical advice. If unwell with a temperature then you can take Paracetamol but DO NOT take Ibuprofen as this can increase the risk of necrotising soft tissue and Reye's Syndrome.

Conjunctivitis

Conjunctivitis means inflammation (redness and soreness) of the clear covering of the white parts of the eyes and the inside of the eyelids.

Infective conjunctivitis is a self-limiting condition which will usually clear up on its own without treatment within 7 days. Antibiotic drops or ointment are not usually necessary.

Infective conjunctivitis is contagious. To help prevent spread to other members of the family, wash hands regularly particularly after touching the eyes and avoiding sharing towels and face cloths.

As conjunctivitis usually clears up on its own and doesn't require treatment it is not usually necessary to consult a doctor.

If however any of the following symptoms/situations occur it is important to seek advice:

- There is a pain in the eye rather than the usual mild discomfort associated with conjunctivitis
- The vision is affected
- The symptoms do not improve within a few days
- There are spots or blisters on the skin surrounding the eye
- There is redness and swelling in the face around the eye

The most appropriate service to access with these symptoms is The Optician via the PEARS scheme. Please call the Optician of your choice to see if they are participating in the PEARS scheme.

