

Safe kids

Healthy kids

Happy kids

## Caring for a Sick Toddler

**Despite a parent's best efforts, toddlers get sick. In fact, doctors tell us that healthy kids catch about 10 to 12 infections per year. That is almost one illness per month.**

Parenting a toddler can be a challenge. Taking care of a sick toddler requires extra effort.

- Toddlers with a fever, respiratory infection, diarrhea and/or vomiting will need fluids to help prevent dehydration. Clear fluids or foods with high water content are best. Stay away from high sugar drinks like sports drinks or soda. Toddlers need to take fluids frequently all day long. They may prefer to take sips at a time.
- Sick children need protein, vitamins and minerals to fight infection. Offer healthy, simple foods that are easy to digest. Chicken noodle soup, applesauce and toast are good choices. Do not serve fatty foods. Toddlers may eat small amounts of food more often instead of 3 meals a day.
- A stuffy nose makes it hard for your toddler to breathe and drink. A *cool mist* humidifier or vaporizer at night might help relieve her stuffy nose.
- Illness causes discomfort.

Clean, loose clothes or pajamas make your toddler more comfortable. Change clothing daily or when they become soiled.

- Toddlers like to be active. Even when sick, a toddler may maintain his normal activity level. He can play unless the doctor orders bed-rest. Your child may prefer the couch – near you and the activity. Cool, clean sheets may help him feel better.
- Sick toddlers need extra attention. They do not understand why they feel bad. Spend time with your sick toddler. Play quiet games. Read books together.

It is difficult to keep an illness from spreading. However, you can help protect the rest of the family.

- Teach and remind everyone to wash hands often. Touch spreads 80% of infectious diseases.
- Make sure you wash your hands after you hold your toddler or throw away dirty tissues.

- Wash your sick toddler's bed sheets daily.
- Use a disinfectant to wipe surfaces and toys your toddler touches. Clean doorknobs and tables.
- Wash bathroom towels regularly. Consider using disposable towels during the illness.
- Disinfect the bathroom if your toddler has vomiting and diarrhea.

Call your doctor if you think your child needs more than your loving care.

 Go to [www.parenthelpline.org](http://www.parenthelpline.org) to read tip sheets on *If Your Child Needs to Go to the ER, Keep Your Family Healthy, Tips for the Flu Season, and Facts About Kids and Colds.*



*Brought to you by Parent Help Line and St. John's Children's Hospital*



**Call the Parent Help Line. Help is just a phone call away.**  
1-217-544-5808 or 1-888-727-5889, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., 7 days a week  
[www.parenthelpline.org](http://www.parenthelpline.org)

