

## Children's Emergency Department (CHED) Unwell Child Discharge Information Leaflet

Your child has been seen in the Emergency Department and the clinician has assessed that your child may be safely treated at home for their illness. It is quite rare for a child to go on to develop a more dangerous illness.

This leaflet is to advise you about how to manage your child's illness and to help you decide where and when to get further advice or assessment if needed.

### **My child has a fever. Should I be worried?**

Fever is a normal part of a child's response to infection. Fever itself is not harmful or dangerous. You shouldn't worry about a fever unless your child has signs of being significantly unwell.

### **What are the signs that a child is significantly unwell?**

Unwell young children often have quite alarming signs that are temporary and resolve. Children who are persistently unwell despite medicines to help them feel better (paracetamol and/ or ibuprofen) are more concerning.

#### **Some signs are more significant:**

- If your child looks like they are having difficulty breathing, breathing fast or the skin is sucking in on their chest when they breathe.
- Prolonged periods of reduced responsiveness, being pale or unable to drink despite having medicines (paracetamol and ibuprofen)
- Dark areas appearing on their skin which don't go pale when you roll a glass over the spots
- Temperature of 38°C or more in a baby less than three months old (unless they have had a vaccination in the past couple of days)

#### **For these signs seek medical advice (see "where can I get help?")**

**Some signs are quite common** during an illness and can be worrying, but may be temporary and settle with paracetamol or ibuprofen medicine:

- Shivering
- Being miserable or less active
- Not wanting to drink

If you see these things in your child and they have not had any paracetamol within the last 4 hours, or ibuprofen in the past 6 hours, you can give them medicine and see if they improve if you feel it is safe to do that.

If they have had all the medicine that they are allowed to have, but still having these problems then you should seek medical advice (**see "where can I get help?" on the last page**).

### **My child doesn't want to eat or drink. What should I do?**

- It is normal for children to have a reduced appetite during illness.
- It is important to encourage fluids.
- A good approach is to offer small amounts of their preferred drink (water, juice, or squash) every few minutes.

- Offering 5-10 ml of fluid every 10 minutes is a good way to ensure hydration. You can use a small syringe to give this if necessary.

### **Is it always safe to give my child paracetamol or ibuprofen?**

It is always safe to give these medicines unless you have been told not to by a health care professional. You can give these medicines even if your child is not eating or drinking and even if they are vomiting.

If you are going to get your child seen, it is helpful if they have had these medicines before they arrive. Paracetamol and ibuprofen won't interfere with a medical assessment or mask a dangerous illness.

### **Giving medicines to your unwell child**

When giving paracetamol and ibuprofen you should always follow the instructions on the bottles. Here are some answers to some frequently asked questions about these medicines:

- It is safe to give both medicines to your child if you don't go above the recommended dose for either in a 24-hour period or give them more often than the bottle says you can.
- It is recommended that if you give both you should wait at least an hour after giving the first medicine before deciding to give the second.
- It isn't dangerous to give them together but spreading them out helps by giving a better spread over 24 hours.
- Your child doesn't need to have a fever to benefit from medicines. You should give your child paracetamol or ibuprofen even if they don't have a fever if they seem miserable, in pain or don't want to eat or drink.
- It is safe to give paracetamol and ibuprofen to your child even if they have been prescribed antibiotics. Antibiotics do not give relief from pain or feeling unwell so if you stop giving paracetamol or ibuprofen your child may feel worse.

### **Where can I get help?**

NHS 111 website or phone advice service

- If you feel that you can manage your child's illness, but you want advice about something (Your local pharmacist may also be able to help)
- If you are unsure about whether your child needs to be seen or needs medical treatment

Your GP or the NHS walk in centre

- If you have been advised to go there by 111
- If you feel that your child needs a medical assessment soon but is not an emergency

Go to your nearest Emergency Department or phone 999

- If your child has the significant features above
- If your instinct is that your child is dangerously unwell, especially if they have had paracetamol and ibuprofen
- If you are advised to do so by 111 or your GP

We aim to provide the best care for every patient. So, we would like your feedback of the care you received from the Hospital. Please visit



