

When Your Child is Feeling Ill

Every time you turn around, there seems to be another one of those childhood diseases or viruses popping up. Parents spend a good deal of time nursing their children through one illness after another. Those poor little tykes need lots of love and reassurance when they're under the weather. Parents often feel helpless and frustrated when their child is ill. Sometimes it's difficult to know just what to do. It's not an easy task, after all it's your child who is suffering and you want it to stop! Let's talk a bit about loving care for sick children and we'll share some ideas that we've read or heard from other parents.

What's the best medicine when children feel ill? Children want basically the same things as adults when they're sick. They want reassurance, diversion, sympathy, nurturing, and most of all 100 percent of someone's presence whose sole purpose is to help them get better. For children, the someone is a parent and we try to do our best.

Children find it comforting when you tell them they will overcome this illness and be back to feeling normal, SOON. This message needs to be delivered often and with confidence. For example you might say "You know what? All that fever is your body's way of getting rid of the stuff that is making you sick. I know it makes you feel bad but it's really a good thing. I'm going to give you some of this medicine and put a nice cool cloth on your forehead. You'll feel a lot better." A parent's cool hand on a hot forehead is always good medicine!

Letting your child spend a sick day in your bed can be soothing and very special. Your bed is always more comfortable and has more room to hold all those games, toys and stuffed animals needed for a speedy recovery.

Children eat differently when they are ill. We all feel the need to have our children eat lots of good food when they are sick. It's probably a good idea to offer smaller servings and offer them more often. This is one time when you will need to be creative when preparing the offering. Cut the jello or toast into small shapes and serve soups or fruit in special bowls. Serve drinks in a fancy container topped off with an interesting straw. These little tricks encourage the child to eat and may help ease the aches and pains for a short time.

Try giving your child a back rub with some special lotion (some of your's works best). A bath is comforting to a sick child. The warm water soothes their aches and pains and the bathroom offers a change of scenery. Supply clean pajamas, straighten the bed and fluff the pillows. All these things help make your little patient feel pretty swell, even when she isn't feeling very well!

There are times when your child is sick and you can't be home with him. Plan ahead for these times. Make a tape of yourself reading some of his favorite

stories; it's always comforting to hear your voice. Call your child during the day, leave little notes of reassurance and when you get home, make sure you allow for lots of hugging time.

Your love is the best medicine you can offer your sick child.

Remember to read instructions for all medication prior to offering it to children. Ensure that it is age appropriate, check the expiry date and keep up- to- date on warnings issued by the medical community. For more information on this topic and other information surrounding childhood illness visit:

www.iwk.nshealth.ca

The IWK Health Centre provides quality care to women, children, youth and families in the Maritimes and beyond.

www.aboutkidshealth.ca

Trusted answers from The Hospital for Sick Children

www.kidshealth.org

Kids Health is the largest and most-visited site on the Web providing doctor-approved health information about children from before birth through adolescence