

Common Childhood Maladies



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Children and Stomach Pain

It would be rare indeed if your child never got a stomach ache, as this is one of the most common problems children complain about. There can many things that can cause stomach pain, and sometimes it may require a visit to the doctor to find out the cause. The stomach ache could be caused by food, insect bites, infections, poisoning etc.

What Causes Stomach Pain

A virus or bacteria also cause many stomach pains. The stomach flu or gastroenteritis may cause stomach pain. Gastroenteritis is caused by inflammation and irritation of the stomach and the gastrointestinal passage. When traveling you must use extra care, as the food or drinks may be contaminated at some places that don't practice good hygiene. This can lead to a case of diarrhea and stomach pain.

If the stomach pain is caused by a viral infection, it will normally pass quickly but bacterial infections will require the use of antibiotics. In either of these cases these cases, some children will recover rapidly by vomiting and excreting. If your child has a case of diarrhea, you need to give them plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration.

Food Poisoning

Some food related stomach pains can be due to food poisoning, food that produces a lot of gas, eating too much and food allergies. If the problems are due to food allergies they will be temporary but can cause bloating. Some symptoms of food poisoning are vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, and nausea. Normally these symptoms will develop within 2 days of consuming the contaminated food.

Depending on the severity of the food poisoning they may experience chills, fever, bloody stools, or even damage to the nervous system can occur. Over 200

diseases are known to be transmitted via food. Food can be poisoned because of toxic agents or infective agents. Infective agents are parasites, bacteria, and viruses. Toxic agents are uncooked food, exotic foods or use of antibiotics.

Overdosing of medications can cause poisoning. There are some insect bites such as a bite by a black widow spider that can cause stomach pain. The pain could also be accompanied by muscle cramps, weakness, tremors, nausea, vomiting and in severe cases even dizziness, fainting, chest pain or respiratory problems.

Can it be Appendicitis

In some very rare cases the stomach pain may be due appendicitis. This results when there is an inflammation and blockage of tissues. If it's appendicitis the pain will start slowly in the stomach near the naval. The pain will then move toward the lower right side of the lower stomach area within 24 hours. Other symptoms will be vomiting, fever, loss of appetite and nausea.

You will need to closely monitor the symptoms, observing the location of pain, how long the pain lasts, nature of vomiting, and urinary problems. If you suspect something serious a pediatrician should be consulted so they can possibly refer your to a gastroenterologist. While waiting for medical attention you need to help the child relax.

It can be helpful to have your child lay down on their stomach if the pain is due to gas. Don't force your child to eat solid food if they are experiencing stomach pain. They should only eat it if they feel comfortable doing so.

Food Allergies Can Be Common in Children

Food allergies are so common in children that there are approx 2 million children suffering from them in the US alone. In some cases these allergies can be life threatening even if the food is ingested in small amounts. At the top of the list are peanuts! Next are eggs, soy, milk, wheat, seafood and other kind of nuts.

These food allergies can occur when the immune system becomes confused. Your immune systems is supposed to protect your body from germs, viruses, bacteria and illness, but in the case of allergies the immune system mistakes the food for something harmful and then takes action to fight off what it perceives to be the offending substance.

Allergic Reactions

If the immune system detects an allergic substance, the antibodies kick in to produce mast cells. These are a kind of immune system cell, which release chemicals, such as histamine, into the bloodstream. These chemicals can affect the respiratory and digestive system, eyes, nose, throat, and skin. In many cases the first symptoms may be a runny nose, tingling sensation in the lips or tongue, or itchy skin rash such as hives.

The allergic reaction may be mild to severe and can vary with each person. Sometimes the symptoms will appear right after the food is eaten or it may take a few hours. Other allergy symptoms are coughing, wheezing, nausea, hoarseness, vomiting, diarrhea, stomach pain, or a tightening of the throat.

Some allergic reactions can be quite severe and may cause something known as anaphylaxis. If this happens they may experience many things at once and can affect their heart, digestion, breathing or skin. Their blood pressure could drop quite rapidly, breathing tubes swell as well as the tongue. In case such as this the

patient should be prepared to with some medication on hand to combat the allergic reaction as it could be life threatening.

In many cases it's quite easy to determine the cause of the food allergy, such as when a child breaks out in hives immediately after eating a certain food. Other times it may be more difficult to pinpoint the food allergy and they may need to run test or observe any reactions from certain foods.

In cases such as lactose intolerant the child may suffer from diarrhea and stomach pain, but this doesn't mean they are allergic to milk. Lactose intolerance is a result of the body being unable to properly breakdown the sugars found in milk and other dairy products.

Foods That Can Cause Allergic Reaction

Normally if a child is allergic to milk and eggs they will outgrow them as they get older. However other allergies such as those related to shrimps, shellfish, or peanuts may last their whole lives. The best way to avoid allergic reactions is for the allergic person to stay away from foods known to cause it.

How to Determine if Your Child Has Eczema

If your child has a skin rash and you know it's not poison ivy or chicken pox, then the rash is likely caused by eczema. An eczema rash will make the skin red, scaly and will have sores. It will also itch a lot. Eczema is also referred to as dermatitis. The term dermatitis means the skin is inflamed so it turns pink and sore. Eczema is a very common childhood problem and normally 1 out of 10 kids will develop it at some point before they are 5. Older children can still get it, but it doesn't occur very often.

What is Eczema?

When the skin gets dry it itches and since eczema dries out the skin it will make it itch. It may even become a rash. It's a chronic condition, which means it will come and go. If a foreign body comes in contact with the skin, and a special kind of cell is present on the skin, it will react to them. Basically, they inflame the skin as a measure of protection. This harmful foreign object will trigger the reaction and cause these special cells to over react.

Family Genes

If a child comes from a family where there are a lot of allergies they are going to be more prone to developing eczema. This is due to the genes that have been passed on to them. On the plus side, eczema is not something that's contagious. The first symptom of eczema is the rash. They will go away, but will come back. Some eczema rashes will itch more than others. It will usually develop inside the elbows and behind the knees and then spread to other parts of the body.

Since rashes can develop for a lot of other reasons, a doctor should examine the rash to make the proper diagnosis. If the itching is really bad the doctor will likely prescribe some lotion or cream to relief the itching. If an infection has developed they will also need some antibiotics.

There are things in a child's environment that can trigger the eczema, such as soap, detergents, perfume, dry air, dust mites or scratchy fabric. The most difficult thing is to prevent the child from scratching as it can lead to infection with bacteria. Also be sure to keep the child's fingernails trimmed and have them drink plenty of water.

Urinary Tract Infections and Your Child

If a child develops a urinary tract infection (UTI) it will be painful for them to urinate and will feel like they need to urinate even when they actually don't. The urine will also have a bad smell due to the bacterial infection.

Normally if a child is experiencing any difficulty urinating or are in pain they will let you know if they are old enough. As a parent you also should observe how many times your child is going to the bathroom. They may also have a fever or chills. They may even have pain in the back or stomach.

Types of Pain

If they should have pain right below the ribs, it's a definite sign of a kidney infection. In these cases you should take your child to a doctor, as they will need to run a urine test and prescribe some medicine to help clear up the infection. If the test shows a kidney infection, the child will be hospitalized for few days. They will be given a germ fighting medicine, which will be delivered by a an IV tube, which will be inserted in a vein.

Your child will start to feel good within at few days after starting on the medicine. But they must stay away from food and liquid which has caffeine in it as it can elevate the bladder irritation and they will feel very uncomfortable.

Prevention

To help avoid urinary tract infections the most critical thing you need to do is maintain good cleanliness. They should be bathed daily and wear clean underwear everyday as well. They should be taught to use a wipe after urinating. They should not hold their urine for long periods of time and be sure they drink plenty of fluids. Cranberry juice and water are the best fluids to help flush bacteria out of the body. As much fun as bubble baths are, they need to be avoided as they can irritate the urethra. By following these simple measures you can help your child avoid getting a urinary tract infection.

Blisters, Calluses and Corns Affect Kids Too

At one time or another just about every kid will have to deal with a blister, corn or a callus. They can cause a lot discomfort but they can be easily prevented by taking some precautions. Blisters, corns or calluses are the result of the skin rubbing against some foreign object.

Corns

A corn is a painful bump that affects the toes. The affected area will become hard and develop thick skin. The skin around the corn may become yellow and looks like a ring around it. Corns will normally appear on the toes and are usually the result of tight fitting shoes. To get some pain relief from corns you can apply a round shaped pad with a hole in the center to help cushion it against further friction. Pads treated with Salicylic acid can be used to help get rid of the corn, and may require a second treatment cycle. If they are in a lot of pain from the corn you may want to consult a Podiatrist.

Calluses

Gymnasts and guitarist will often develop calluses. Gymnasts can develop them when working with uneven parallel bars and guitarists can develop them when playing with the strings continuously. However once a callus has formed, they can make their tasks easier. Gymnasts can swing on bars more easily and guitarists can play the guitar well.

If a callus forms on the sole of the foot it can be very painful with every step they take as they will often form on the ball, the curved part of the sole near the toes, heels or on small toes. The best medicine is prevention so it's advisable to avoid shoes that are too tight or high heels, as they tend to put too much pressure on certain points. One way to remove the callus is to soak it in warm water and then run the dead skin off with a pumice stone.

Blisters

Blisters will often form when breaking in some new shoes as they are rubbing against certain areas of your foot such as the heel or toes. If breaking in new shoes it's best to wear a shoe pad to help avoid friction. A blister will contain a watery fluid, which will normally break pretty easily. Blisters can form on your hands when using gardening tools to do yard work. This is why it's always best to wear protective gloves when doing such tasks.

Children and Swimmers Ear

A child can develop swimmers ear when a bacterial growth has taken place inside the ear canal. This is not to be confused with more common ear infections children tend to get when they have a cold. The medical term for swimmers ear is 'Otitis externa' and involves bacterial infection in the ear canal, which leads to the eardrum.

What Causes It

The skin found in that section of the ear is very delicate and is protected naturally by a thin layer of earwax. This allows water to go in and out the ear easily. A problem occurs when the water washes away all or some of this earwax coating, which allows the water to stay inside the ear and bacteria starts to breed.

Symptoms may include pain, redness, swelling and itching in the ear. You should be careful not to let the ear get bumped as it may cause severe pain.

You will need to take the child to the doctor to confirm the diagnosis and treatment. The doctor will prescribe some antibiotics to kill off the bacteria. You will want to be sure and follow the dosage and treatment times very stringently or the bacteria will regain a foothold again. In some cases they insert a wick in the ear if the doctor thinks the medicine needs to be applied directly. If the child is in a lot of pain you may also give him some pain relievers such as Tylenol.

Swimmer's ear is not normally caused by water entering the ear when taking baths or showers. Often children, who are a member of the summer swimming camp, will complain of this problem. Once he swimmer's ear is treated, the child shouldn't be allowed to swim right away.

Treatment

A Doctor, will normally advice them to stay away from water for 1-2 weeks. This may seem like a long time period, but the ear needs time to become completely healed. There are special eardrops available over the counter, which can be put

in the child's ear after swimming that will help to dry up any water inside the ear. An inquisitive child trying to put things in the ear and therefore damaging could also cause a swimmer's ear. This scratched area can allow bacteria to develop. To avoid this scenario it will be up to the parent's supervision.

Why Children are Prone to Ear Infections

The dreaded middle ear infection is quite common in young children. The reason children tend to be more prone to ear infections is due to the connection of the tube between the middle ear to the back of the nose. The child's tube tends to be narrower and doesn't get good ventilation like an adult does. However by the time a child reaches the age of 6-8 the tube will have matured more to an adult level of functioning.

The throat is connected to the middle portion of the ear through a channel known as Eustachian tube and in fact middle portions of both the ears are connected to the throat by two Eustachian tubes. The job of these tubes is to allow the free movement of air, from the middle ear, in and out direction. Infants below three years have less developed and smaller Eustachian tubes and therefore are less capable of keeping germs completely out of the middle ear. When a child gets a middle ear infection it fills up with pus or a gooey yellow liquid and it can be quite painful as it's like a balloon ready to pop.

What causes it

Normally a child who has allergies will be more prone to ear infections and may often accompany a cold. This is because when a child has a cold the Eustachian tube gets obstructed and germs may get in the middle ear. Once they get in the ear the germs can rapidly multiply. When a child gets an ear infection they will normally have a fever as well as the pain in the ear. While an ear infection is not contagious it's best to see a doctor right a way to prevent the infection from getting worse and possibly causing damage to the eardrum.

Treatment

The doctor will normally prescribe them an antibiotic and a pain reliever. Be sure they take all of antibiotics as prescribed or the infection could return.

You can help your child avoid ear infections by teaching them to wash their hands regularly and to avoid people who have a cold. If they do come in contact with an infected person they need to wash their hands and to be sure not to touch their nose or eyes. If you're a smoker don't smoke around your kids as it can often be responsible for causing problems with the way the Eustachian tube functions.

Kids and Pinkeye

The medical term for Pinkeye is conjunctivitis but most people use the term "pinkeye". If your child develops pinkeye their eye (s) are likely going to be red, swollen and itchy! They may even have a little gooey liquid discharge coming from the eye as well. Pinkeye is very contagious and can be spread very easily.

In some cases only one eye will be affected, but in most cases both eyes will be affected. It's not painful but the itching can be maddening. It may feel much like when you get an eyelash in your eye or a tiny dirt particle. If your child gets infected with Pinkeye it will likely last for about a week and in many cases will go away by itself. However if the itching is really bad you should treat it with some medicine. Some children will develop an ear infection as well because they have spread the bacteria their ear.

What Causes Pinkeye?

The Pinkeye is caused by a bacteria or a virus. The virus that can cause Pinkeye is often also responsible for causing a cold. It's spread by touching so when a child or infected person rubs their eye and then you happen to touch their hand you can also become infected. This means the parents or other family members can become infected as well. The best prevention is to wash your hands frequently with some warm water and anti-bacterial soap. Pinkeye can also be caused by allergies or because of irritating foreign body in the eyes. Pinkeye that is caused this way isn't contagious

Treatment

A doctor should be consulted if the itchiness is very irritating. The doctor will examine the eyes for redness and see if there is any discharge. If the pinkeye is the result of bacterial infection, the doctor will prescribe antibiotic eye ointment or drops. Normally infants will be given an eye ointment, but older children and adults will be given eye drops. The drops or ointment should be administered 4-5

times a day for about seven days. The treatment should be continued until you get rid of the infection completely.

If Pinkeye is caused by a virus then antibiotics will not be of any help. If the infection is caused by allergies the doctor can prescribe special eye drops to treat the symptoms. Warm water is another way to relief the itching. Be sure to put any washcloths you used to treat pinkeye, directly into the laundry so that you don't spread it to other family members.

Growing Pains Really Do Exist

While most of us may think of 'growing pains' as just a term thrown around without any real basis there really is such a thing as “growing pains”. Studies show that 25-40% children really do experience 'growing pains'. These growing pains are most likely to appear between the ages of 3-5 or 8-12 and these pains are normally felt in the calve area of the legs. These pains will usually occur in the afternoon or at night. Some children may go to bed without any pains but wake up in the night with leg pains, however they will be gone by morning.

Symptoms

These growing pains affect the muscle area rather than the bones or joints. One of biggest reason kids will get these 'growing pains' is because of all the activity they have been doing during the day, such as running, climbing or jumping which tire the muscles. Some kids may experience growing pains when they are going thru a growth spurt. This occurs because the tendons or muscles are too tight and are not in sync with the growth of the bones. This may cause muscle spasms that could last for up to 15 minutes. If a growth spurt is causing the pain they will normally experience pain in both legs. If the pain persists after arising then there could be something else causing the pain and a visit to the doctor may be needed.

Treatments

If the child is in a lot of pain and can't be relieved by over the counter treatments such as heating pads, ibuprofen or Tylenol or if the pain is accompanied by swelling, fever or redness then something more serious is wrong and you should take them to a doctor. The doctor will examine your child's medical history and conduct an examination. In some serious cases, the doctor may advice r X-rays or blood test before a final decision can be made.

If your child is getting a lot of growing pains you should encourage them to do some daily stretching exercises. The exercise should be continued even after the pain subsides in an effort to help prevent the pains from coming back. You'll also

want to be sure your child drinks plenty of fluids as this can help decrease painful cramping. It's also a good idea to give them some water before they go to bed.