

Sometimes less
medicine is better
for your child:
Five examples



When children are ill, parents
and paediatricians want
the suffering to end as soon
as possible. But sometimes
a medical treatment does
more harm than good.



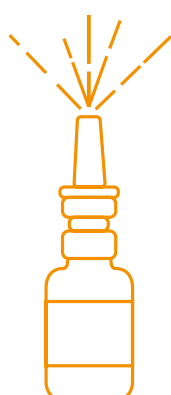
1 Middle ear inflammation

An acute middle ear inflammation in children should not be treated routinely with an antibiotic.

A middle ear inflammation (otitis media) is often the result of a viral illness and does not need to be treated with an antibiotic. The inappropriate use of antibiotics leads to various unwanted side effects such as allergic reactions, the development of resistance, diarrhoea or other complications. Middle ear inflammation often heals on its own over time.

What you can do:

- For severe pain give your child painkillers such as paracetamol or ibuprofen – at the dosage appropriate for the child's age and weight.
- Care for the nose with isotonic saline solution.
- Return to the paediatrician after two or three days if there is no improvement.



2 Reflux of stomach contents

Do not administer antacids to treat the reflux of stomach contents in babies.

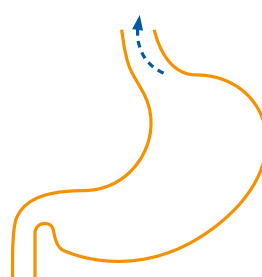
The reflux of stomach contents during infancy is a normal process and does not require treatment with antacids. Half of all babies experience reflux. This starts during the first month of life and increases up to the age of 4 to 5 months. The babies bring up a portion of their meals partly as a result of a digestive system that is not fully matured.

Suppressing the production of gastric acid does not improve unexplained crying or regurgitation. The use of antacids can even be harmful in small children and trigger infections of the airways, changes in the intestinal flora and weakening of the bones.

In the event of projectile vomiting, constant crying or poor weight gain, the child should be examined by a doctor.

What you can do:

- You can raise the baby's upper body during the day in order to reduce the reflux (elevate the upper body by 30 degrees, for example with a bath towel).



3 Coughing

Do not give your children cough medicines.

Coughing is usually a normal defence mechanism of the body. Herbal and chemical cough medicines are not effective against colds. They can even be harmful to children, as shown by various studies. Cough medicines frequently consist of several active substances. Taken together with other medicines, they can lead to overdoses of these active substances.

What you can do:

- Give honey to children aged 12 months and older: with a teaspoon or in tea.
- Do not expose the child to cigarette smoke.
- Provide a good indoor environment with a humidity of 50–60% and a room temperature of 18°C.
- Elevate the child's upper body.



4 Gastroenteritis

For children with mild or moderate fluid loss (e.g. during gastroenteritis with vomiting and/or diarrhoea), the missing fluid should be administered by mouth.

In a severe case of gastroenteritis, the fluid loss can be substantial in small children. This loss must be compensated, and the fluid can be replaced in various ways. The gentlest and healthiest method is to compensate for the loss by drinking.

If the child does not drink enough, the fluid can be administered directly into the stomach or bloodstream. For administration into the stomach a fine tube is inserted via the nose and oesophagus. For administration into the bloodstream, a fine tube is inserted directly into a vein and connected to an infusion. Since the veins in these children are poorly filled this procedure can sometimes require several attempts and prove painful and stressful for the child.

What you can do:

- Give your child diluted apple juice, breast milk or other favourite drinks – using a teaspoon or letting the child take sips.
- You can also give your children electrolyte solutions that can be bought over the counter.



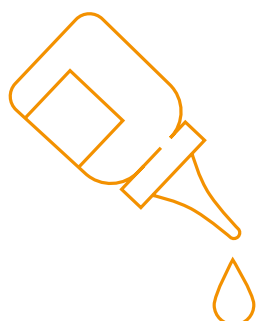
5 Viral infection of the small airways

Do not routinely use steroids or asthma medicines in babies with a viral infection of the small airways.

Bronchiolitis is an inflammation of the smallest airways in the lung caused by cold viruses. The inflammation manifests itself as a severe productive cough with a runny nose and, usually, fever. This often affects babies, who then have difficulty breathing and drinking properly. In this situation, steroids or asthma medicines neither reduce the risk of your child being admitted to hospital nor do they shorten the illness. Quite the opposite, since such medicines can lower the oxygen level in the blood or lead to a fast heart rate or tremors.

What you can do:

- Moisten your child's nose with an isotonic saline solution.
- Let your child drink smaller portions frequently.
- Give your child the time needed to recover.



pädiatrie schweiz is committed to the well-being of children

Unnecessary treatments or investigations are not just expensive, they are also often harmful to the children.

pädiatrie schweiz, the national association of Swiss paediatricians, is committed to “Smarter Medicine”. This initiative follows the principle that a treatment should be administered only if it actually benefits the patients.

Sometimes being patient is better than treating.

- You can find more information about the five examples in this brochure at paediatricschweiz.ch/choosingwisely
- This website provides information in the following languages as PDF files to download and print out: German, English, French, Italian, Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian, Portuguese, Spanish and Turkish



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