HEALTH CARE AT HOME

A guide to self-treatment
This guide presents treatment instructions for common illnesses, symptoms and injuries that can be cared for in the home. Home care can relieve symptoms at their onset and often ease the inconvenience associated with illness and injuries considerably. The guide also contains instructions for when it is best to contact health care professionals.

Useful information on illnesses, symptoms and their care can also be found online at www.terveyskirjasto.fi (in Finnish only). Each illness and its symptoms are nevertheless highly individual, so if you are unsure of your condition, it is best to contact a health care professional, like your own health station nurse. In case of an emergency, call the emergency number 112 directly!

On weekdays during opening hours, the best source of both urgent and non-urgent care is your local health station. The health professionals at your local health station are there to assist you assess your illness and symptoms and the urgency with which you require care. Whenever you have a health concern, call your local health station first.

On evenings and weekends, you can also call the Central Hospital Emergency Health Centre service line for phone consultation regarding the immediate care of a sudden injury or illness, or where you should seek treatment. The Central Hospital Emergency Health Centre phone consultation number is 0100 84 884. Remember small children and the elderly always require more urgent care!

Your local pharmacy sells a variety of products that are suitable for home care. Pharmacy personnel are happy to help you select the products that will help you best. Always use medicine according to the instructions on the package leaflet. The pharmacy personnel will also provide you with instructions on the safe and proper use of their products.

This guide has been prepared as part of a North Karelian sub-project of Finland’s RAMPE project (Proficient Professionals in Primary Health Care). The guide contains reliable and up-to-date information on a range of symptoms and illnesses, based on the www.terveysportti.fi and www.terveyskirjasto.fi online health resources. The content of the guide has been produced in cooperation with the employees of the North Karelian health services, and residents of North Karelia were given the opportunity to comment.
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FLU, COLD WITH A FEVER

 Symptoms
 - Nasal congestion
 - Runny nose
 - Sore throat
 - Fever and chills
 - Cough starts after a few days and often continues after other symptoms have disappeared
 - Flu symptoms usually continue for more than one week

 Home care
 - Make sure to drink plenty of liquids!
 - Remember to rest!
 - Wash your hands often! (so as not to infect others)
 - Cough and sneeze into disposable tissues or your upper sleeve!
 - Anti-inflammatories (ibuprofen) or fever-reducing analgesics (paracetamol) can ease your condition.
 - Nasal spray and drips from your local pharmacy can ease nasal congestion. Ask your pharmacy for more information.
 - Cough medicines usually provide very little help. Cough medicines can be of help if coughing interferes with your sleep. Prescription cough medicines are no more effective than over-the-counter versions.
 - Sore throats can be soothed with cough drops or sprays that calm the pharynx, available at your local pharmacy. Ask your pharmacy for more information.
 - The best way to care for a hoarse voice (laryngitis) is to refrain from speaking. Whispering puts more strain on your vocal cords than speaking quietly.
 - Short repetitions of 40-44°C steam inhalation can relieve the symptoms of a cold with fever. Discontinue the treatment if it is uncomfortable for any reason.
 - The flu rarely requires a physician's care. Antibiotics have no effect against viral infections and are therefore not used in the treatment of flu.

 Contact Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:
 - your general condition weakens
 - your symptoms continue and home care offers no relief
 - your cough continues to be a disturbance for more than 3 weeks
CHILDREN AND THE FLU

Symptoms

- Nasal congestion
- Runny nose
- Sore throat
- Fever and chills
- Cough starts after a few days and often continues after other symptoms have disappeared
- Flu symptoms usually continue for more than one week

Home care

- Make sure the child drinks enough liquids!
- An anti-inflammatory (ibuprofen) and/or fever-reducing analgesic (paracetamol) are effective medications for lowering a fever related to the flu and relieving nausea. Check that the dosage complies with the child's age and weight! Ask your pharmacy for more information. Do not use aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) with children.
- A tissue is the best medicine for a runny nose. Use disposable tissues!
- Relieve nasal congestion and mucus with nasal drops/spray or saline drops from the pharmacy.
- It is helpful to raise the head of the sick child’s bed with pillows or by placing books under the bed’s legs.
- Short repetitions of 40-44°C steam inhalation can relieve the symptoms of a cold with fever. Discontinue if the treatment is uncomfortable for any reason.
- Cough medicines usually provide very little help. Ask your local pharmacy personnel for instruction in the use of cough medicines.
- Antibiotics have no effect on viral infections and are therefore not used in the treatment of the flu.

Contact Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:

- the child has a high fever and is tired
- the child’s breathing becomes short and laboured
- the child wheezes distinctly while breathing
- the child feels discomfort despite pain medication
- fever continues for more than five days
- fever goes down but then rises again after a few days
- the child’s eyes begin to secrete a discharge
- the flu continues for over two weeks

The general condition of the child is very important. If the child appears unusually tired, he or she should always be brought to a health care professional for examination!
WOUNDS

Surface wounds can be easily cared for at home.

Symptoms
- Wounds can be chafes, abrasions, scratches, tears, slashes or punctures

Home care
- Wash your hands.
- Clean the wound and its surrounding area with soap and running water and/or disinfectant. At the same time, carefully remove any foreign objects in the wound, e.g., sand or glass shards.
- Press down on the wound for a few minutes with a clean compress until the wound stops bleeding.
- Place a gauze pad over the wound and secure it with more gauze or surgical tape. A bandage should allow enough air to reach the wound.
- If the wound’s discharge secretes through the dressing, change the dressing at least once a day. (Remove the gauze pad carefully: If the dressing has adhered to the wound, soak the dressing in water so it will come off easily.)
- If the wound is secreting fluid, rinse it with water a few times each day.

Contact an Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:
- the wound is bleeding excessively and does not stop after 20 minutes of compression
- the wound is large, jagged or dirty
- it is an animal bite or other kind of deep wound
- there is a foreign object, for example, a piece of glass, embedded in the wound that you are unable to remove
- you are unable to clean the wound yourself
- the wound begins to ache, burn or grow red
- the wound begins to secrete fluids or becomes infected
- a fever develops

The wound should be closed with tissue adhesives or sutures within six hours of the injury, if so required.
Check that tetanus shots are up-to-date. Booster shots should be administered every ten years.
INSECT BITES AND STINGS

The majority of Finnish insects are harmless and their bites and stings will heal on their own. In the case of a healthy adult, single wasp or bee stings are not dangerous.

Symptoms
- Painful, red and itchy swelling of the skin

Home care
- Clean the bite or sting area. Do not pinch, squeeze or scratch it.
- A cold compress or wrap can help with the swelling and pain, along with pain relief medicine, if necessary. Do not place cold compresses directly onto bare skin!
- A mild cortisone cream from your local pharmacy can help with the itching.

Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:
- you have had an allergic reaction in the past to bites or stings
- the pain and swelling increase and breathing becomes laboured
- you get a fever, feel nauseous or lose consciousness momentarily
- you have several bee stings or have been stung in the mouth, throat or eye and you have the symptoms mentioned above

The following over-the-counter products are available at your local pharmacy (good to have at home in case of an emergency):
- A mild cortisone cream that can be spread on bites and stings.
- Finnish pharmacies sell kyppakkaus hydrocortisone tablets that can help to ease the pain of snakebites and bee and wasp stings. The adder is the only venomous snake in Finland and its bite is not fatal. Snakebite victims should always see a physician.
- Antihistamine tablets can ease itching.
- Pain relief medication

If swelling continues and breathing becomes laboured, see a health care professional immediately!
SKIN DISORDERS

Dry air, excessive washing and changes in temperature can all cause dry skin. Allergies, bacteria, viral and fungal infections, chemical irritants, genetic factors, etc. can all lead to skin disorders. Itchiness is made worse by perspiration, oily lotions, stress and coarse clothing.

Symptoms

- Roughness, scaling, ulceration, redness and itching of the skin
- Infected skin is red, burning and/or sensitive
- Blisters may form on the skin

Home care

- Keep the skin clean; normal washing with warm water and a mild soap will suffice.
- Wash and dry the spaces between your toes and the folds of your body well. Use talcum, gauze pads or cotton balls in these areas if they aren't otherwise exposed to air and tend to foment.
- Dry skin and mild rashes can be treated with all-purpose lotions or moisturizing lotions that also relieve itching, available at your local pharmacy.
- A mild cortisone lotion from the pharmacy can be used for a maximum of two weeks on irritated skin.
- Avoid scratching itchy areas! Trim your nails so they are short, and if necessary use cotton gloves to avoid scratching.
- Avoid things that will irritate your skin (i.e., soaps, wet diapers or perspiration).
- Keep your lotion in the refrigerator so it cools your skin when applied.
- Wear loose-fitting underwear, preferably made of cotton.

Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:

- the irritated area is large, foul-smelling or watery
- the itching is unbearable, despite home care
- other symptoms are associated with the rash, like a fever or nausea
- the rash does not heal with home care
SEASONAL INFLUENZA

Influenza is an abrupt upper respiratory infection caused by an influenza virus. Several strains of seasonal influenza occur each winter. Healthy adults usually recover from seasonal influenza with 1-2 weeks of bed rest. Influenza in children, the elderly or people with other general illnesses can sometimes lead to complications (e.g., ear infections, pneumonia) that may require hospital care. A person who has contracted the influenza virus is contagious for close to a week, beginning the day before symptoms occur and continuing for 3-7 days afterwards. The germination time is normally 2-3 days.

Symptoms
- Sudden high temperature
- Sore throat, cough and runny nose
- Other symptoms include aching muscles and joints, headaches, fatigue and chills, sometimes even vomiting and diarrhoea. Children may also experience a stomach ache.

Home care
- If your symptoms are mild, you are not considered to be at risk. As a rule, a physician’s diagnosis is not required, nor is medication. It is enough to stay home until the illness has passed. Avoid close contact with others and stay home for as long as symptoms remain.
- Sufficient rest and liquids is of primary importance.
- Products from your local pharmacy can help relieve the fever and pain. Read the home care instructions for the flu for more tips!

If you have another health disorder or are otherwise considered to be at risk, please contact a health care professional at the first sign that your influenza symptoms worsen or continue for too long!

Symptoms in children that require urgent care
- the child does not wake or react to anything
- breathing difficulties
- skin is bluish or grey
- the child is not drinking enough
- the child is violently or continuously vomiting
- the child is so touchy that he or she does not want to be held
- influenza-like symptoms dissipate and then return again

Symptoms in adults that require urgent care
- breathing difficulties
- chest pain or pressure
- sudden dizziness or disorientation
- violent or continuous vomiting
- influenza-like symptoms dissipate and then return again

Lower infection risk and stop the spread of germs by observing the following:
• Cover your mouth and nose with a disposable tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw your used tissues in the rubbish directly. If you don’t have tissue available, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.

• Wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand disinfectant whenever you leave the house, before meals and especially each time after you cough or sneeze. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth if you haven’t just washed your hands.

INFLUENZA SHOTS ARE AN IMPORTANT WAY TO PREVENT INFLUENZA!
THREADWORMS

Most common in young children between 3 and 10, threadworms, also known as pinworms, can also infect older children and adults. Threadworms are white thread-like worms less than a millimetre wide and about a centimetre long. They are spread via the worm's eggs, that are transferred to the mouth through poor hygiene. It is also possible to become infected by a series of events involving touching infected areas: from the skin around the anus to the hand, from the hand to a surface, from the surface to a hand and from hand to mouth.

Symptoms
- Itchiness around the anus, especially at night
- Worms in stools
- Loss of appetite, touchiness
- Scratching can lead to a bacterial infection of the skin

Home care
- Threadworms can be eliminated by taking two doses of threadworm medication, available over-the-counter at your local pharmacy. The second dose is taken three weeks after the first. Ask your pharmacy for more information.
- The day after the first dose, it is recommended that all bedclothes, pajamas, stuffed animals and the like be machine washed and all rooms vacuumed. Threadworm eggs in mattresses, duvets and pillows can be destroyed in two ways: prolonged heat exposure in the sauna or extended time outside in freezing temperatures.
- IT IS IMPORTANT TO ENFORCE EXTRA GOOD PERSONAL HYGIENE AND WASH YOUR HANDS THOROUGHLY!
- Trim fingernails so they are short.
- It is recommended that the entire family be treated at once, even those without threadworm infection symptoms.
- If one-third of the children in a day care group become infected, it is recommended that the entire group undergo treatment. Threadworm infection does not prohibit children from attending day care.

Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:
- symptoms are not relieved after one round of treatment
- a rash appears around the anus

REMEMBER TO INFORM YOUR DAY CARE FACILITY AND SCHOOL! Contact the school nurse for cases involving school-age children.
**EARACHE**

The most common reason for an earache is an ear infection, a common illness in children under school age. Ear infections can usually be contributed to a viral or bacterial infection.

**Symptoms indicating an ear infection**

- Pain in the ear
- Runny nose, cough, fever
- Hearing difficulties
- Discharge from ear
- Restlessness at night
- Touchiness
- Loss of appetite
- Small child’s flu continues for over two weeks
- Eye discharge continues despite preventive care

**Home care**

- If pain that begins at night is bearable, wait until the morning to seek care. If the pain is mild, it is possible to wait until the next working day when the health station is open.
- Anti-inflammatories (ibuprofen) and fever-reducing analgesics (paracetamol) can provide urgent pain relief. Check that the dosage complies with the child's age and weight!
- Eardrops with numbing agents can be used, but only if there is no discharge from the ears.
- It is a good idea to raise the head of the bed with pillows or by placing books under the bed’s legs.

**Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:**

- ear pain does not pass after 1-2 days with pain relief medication
- parts of the ear become red
- the ear leaks a discharge or is bleeding
- symptoms are not relieved despite home care
**EARWAX BUILDUP**

Earwax protects the skin of the ear canal by creating a protective lining. Excess earwax is created when too much earwax is secreted and it dries quickly. If objects are inserted into the ear, the wax can be pushed back and become impacted. If water enters the ear canal and is absorbed into the wax, it could swell until it closes the entire ear canal.

**Symptoms**
- Hearing difficulties
- Humming in the ears
- Pain
- Dizziness
- The feel of pressure in the ear

**Home care and prevention**
- If the reason for the blockage is determined to be excess earwax, the pharmacy carries ear drops designed to soften and remove the wax, if used in the method instructed.
- Earwax can also be softened by applying skin oil to the area for several consecutive days. Ask your pharmacy for more information.

**Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:**
- your ear becomes blocked suddenly or you develop pain in your ear
- you experience dizziness in association with your ear blockage
- your ear is bleeding
- symptoms are not relieved despite home care

Ear irrigation by a health care professional is only necessary if home care does not produce results.
SORE THROAT

The most common reasons for a sore throat are inflammation of the throat and throat dryness from nasal congestion. A throat can become sore from any irritant, the most common being smoking, but also dust and chemicals. Inflammation of the throat or tonsils can be caused by either a viral or bacterial infection.

Symptoms
- Pain on swallowing
- Dry, rough swallowing
- Redness or coating of the throat
- Throat pain often travels to the ears, even though the ears are not infected

Home care
- A sore throat brought on by a virus is usually the first sign of the flu, and will pass of its own accord with time.
- An anti-inflammatory (ibuprofen) or pain relief/fever-reducing analgesic (paracetamol) can help to relieve the pain.
- Your local pharmacy carries lozenges and sprays developed to soothe a sore throat.
- Remember to drink plenty of liquids!

Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:
- the sore throat continues for 1-2 weeks for an unknown reason with no fever
- intense sore throat pain coupled with a high fever is grounds for seeking medical help within 24 hours
- someone near you has been diagnosed with strep throat/pharyngitis, your throat is red and you have a fever
- symptoms are not relieved despite home care

If a sore throat causes jumbled speech or breathing difficulties, or makes it impossible to swallow or open the mouth properly, seek medical care at once!
FEVER

A fever is when your body temperature rises above its normal range. Many illnesses bring on a fever. The most common reason is a cold with a fever that has been brought on by a virus, which typically begins with a high fever and continues for several days. Even a 40-degree fever is not normally considered dangerous, although it causes fatigue and listlessness as important liquids escape the body. A rapid increase in body temperature is also a symptom of many inflammatory diseases. Gastrointestinal infections brought on by a virus are also often accompanied by vomiting, diarrhoea and a fever. In addition to local symptoms like redness and burning, localized infections like an abscess or acute skin infection can also cause a fever. Fevers can occur in association with any number of viral and bacterial infections.

Symptoms
- Chills, muscle pain
- Headache
- Fatigue

Home care
- Drink plenty of liquids!
- Avoid stress and strain
- Rest and monitor your condition
- Maintaining a cool room temperature, wearing light clothing and taking fever and pain medication as instructed can reduce the fever.

Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:
- your general condition deteriorates quickly
- you experience neck pain, nausea or vomiting in addition to your fever
- you experience redness or burning in one or more of your joints in addition to your fever
- you have lower stomach or back pain or a urinal tract infection in addition to your fever
- the fever has continued for 3-4 days and is clearly not caused by a common cold
- fever returns after having dissipated for a few days
- your skin becomes red
NAILBED INFECTION

Nailbed infections are situations in which the nail bed becomes infected, sometimes swelling and loosening from the nail. Trimming the nails very short can lead to ingrown nails, where the nail burrows down inside the nail bed. A nailbed infection can occur along the sides of the nail or in the cuticle at the root of the nail. Ingrown toenails can also be caused by shoes that are too tight or other pressure on the toes.

Symptoms
- Pain and burning in the fingers or toes
- The nail bed is excessively red
- The nail bed drains pus
- In chronic (long-term) nail bed infections, the bed becomes swollen and loosens from the nail. Ridges may appear on the nail and a dull pain emits from the nail bed.

Home care/preventive measures
- Cut nails in the proper shape, maintain their cleanliness.
- Avoid picking at cuticles and hangnails.
- Do not remove cuticles from your nails.
- Anti-inflammatory or pain relief medicine can relieve the pain and ache if necessary.
- The most important way to avoid chronic nail bed infections is to prevent abscesses from occurring:
  - Wear protective gloves if necessary
  - Soak or rinse your toenails/fingernails once a day
  - In the evenings, apply an antiseptic cream to the nails beds until the infection passes
  - The most important way to prevent ingrown toenails is to use loose-fitting shoes.
  - Do not keep your feet in damp conditions (e.g., rain boots, wet trainers) for long periods!
  - Protect your feet and hands and keep them warm in cold weather.

If necessary, contact a foot specialist!

Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:
- symptoms are not relieved despite home care
- the nail bed is red, gives off a burning sensation, is painful or has a buildup of pus
Corns and calluses are toughened thick masses the skin builds up to protect against rubbing or pressure.

**Symptoms**
- At first a corn or callus feels thick. As it grows inward, however, it creates pressure and becomes painful.

**Home care**
- A corn or callus can be removed in a few weeks by cutting a piece of medicated corn or callus plaster (containing salicylic acid) to the right size and fastening it with e.g. medical tape over the corn or callus. Change the corn or callus plaster every two days until the corn or callous and its 'root' are gone. Plasters usually prove effective within 2-4 weeks.
- Healing can be hastened by filing the callus with a callus shaver, available at your local pharmacy. Take care not to harm the healthy skin surrounding the corn or callus!
- Avoid reappearance of the corn or callus by using other shoes or wearing a felt circle around the spot where it used to be. Several shoe inserts and gel inserts are also available to help repair the situation.
- Techniques that employ liquid nitrogen or wart drops will not help with corns or calluses.
- It is recommended that you visit a foot specialist if your corn or callus inhibits your walking and if you have been unsuccessful removing it with home care. A foot specialist can pare down the corn or callus with a scalpel.

**Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:**
- symptoms are not relieved with home care, or after a visit to a foot specialist
- there are signs that the corn or callus has become infected: pain, burning or redness
MOLLUSCUM OR WATER WARTS, see also Corns and calluses and Warts

Molluscum are lesions brought on by the *molluscum contagiosum* virus, appearing rarely in adults but often in children. Molluscum is very common among children with dry skin, diagnosed as atopic eczema. The germination period is anywhere from two weeks to six months. Molluscum usually remain for months, sometimes even years, but they eventually clear up on their own, leaving no scars. There is no need to limit children’s contact with others, as the condition is not dangerous. Day care and school attendance can continue normally. Molluscum usually clears up on its own with time, even without any kind of care.

**Symptoms**
- Molluscum are flesh-coloured lesions a few millimetres in diameter with a dimpled centre
- Sometimes there are just a few, although more often there are dozens or even hundreds
- Molluscum most commonly appear in places where the skin is thin, e.g., in joints, thighs and underarms
- Individual molluscum lesions may be difficult to identify

**Home care**
- Avoid rubbing.
- Do not scratch them.
- Moisturizing the skin with a general-purpose lotion and/or a lotion containing hydrocortisone can relieve the patient’s condition.
- It is important to maintain good hygiene and wash your hands frequently!

**Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:**
- the molluscum lesions are very large and numerous
- the area with molluscum begins to burn, turn red or secrete liquid
- symptoms are not relieved despite home care
SKIN INFECTIONS

Impetigo, the most common skin infection, is caused by *staphylococcus aureus* and *streptococcus pyogenes* bacteria. It is highly infectious among children and rare in adults. Impetigo is transferred most easily by hand contact.

**Symptoms**
- It most often begins as a red sore near the nose or mouth which bursts before the blister is even noticed.
- The base of the blister leaks a fluid that dries to form a honey-coloured crust or scab. The blisters and scabs spread to a large area in the span of just a few days.
- Lymph nodes in the infected area may become swollen and sensitive.
- Skin infections that spread over large areas can also be accompanied by a fever.

**Home care**
- Maintain good hygiene and wash your hands frequently.
- Rinse the infected area, wash it with soap and dry it twice a day.
- Disinfect the skin with an antiseptic lotion.
- Use an antibacterial lotion twice a day for a week on the infected area.
- If the infection returns, the source of the infection is usually in the bearer's or other family member's nose. The infection can also take root in the family pet, especially in the ears of dogs with hanging ears. If this is the case, it is good to disinfect the noses of everyone in the family with antibacterial cream and use antibacterial powder in the dog's ears for five consecutive days. Ask your pharmacy for more information.

**Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:**
- the skin infection symptoms do not go away after a week of home care
- the infected area is large or continues to grow despite home care
- the infected child is still an infant
- a fever begins in association with the skin infection
- the skin infection is on the face, beard or scalp

**REMEMBER TO INFORM YOUR DAY CARE FACILITY AND SCHOOL!** Contact the school nurse for cases involving school-age children!

The infection is no longer contagious after 48 hours of localized home care or after 24 hours of antibiotic use.
NOSEBLEEDS

Nosebleeds can begin spontaneously or begin as the result of the flu, violent sneezing, nosepicking, a wound or high blood pressure.

Symptoms
- Bleeding can vary from small drops to copious flowing

Home care
- Blow all the blood clots out of your nose.
- Pinch your nostrils together for 15-30 minutes without stopping.
- Rest in a half-sitting position, leaning forward.
- Place a cold compress or bag of ice on your nose and neck (but not directly on your skin).
- Suck on a piece or pieces of ice, it will also cool the nose and throat area.
- Avoid picking your nose, exertion, hot food and drink, hot showers, sauna and alcohol for a few days.
- To prevent dry membranes in the nose, use nose drops containing sesame oil and vitamin A or nose sprays available at your local pharmacy. Ask your pharmacy for more information.
- Your local pharmacy also sells nasal tampons that can be used to stop bleeding.

Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:
- nose bleeds do not stop in 2-3 hours
- nose bleeds occur frequently
- there is copious bleeding
BURNS

First-degree burns only affect the superficial layer of the skin, leaving the skin red and sensitive. An aching pain results, but no blisters form. First-degree burns can be caused by the sun or a hot liquid, for example. Small burn wounds can be cared for at home.

Second-degree burns penetrate into the underlying layers of skin. They can be caused by hot liquids, steam or oil, for example. The area of the wound is swollen, very painful and contains blisters.

Home care
- Cool down the burned area quickly with cool water for 15-30 minutes, as this calms the area and helps relieve the pain.
- Remove loose objects, like rings, as soon as possible, as swelling will make this even harder later.
- Do not burst the blisters that appear.
- Anti-inflammatory (ibuprofen) and pain relief (paracetamol) products can relieve the pain.
- Place paraffin or vaseline gauze dressing (e.g. Jelonet and Lomatuell) on the skin first, so the rest of the dressing will not stick to the wound. Next place clean gauze pads on top of the wound. Change every 2-3 days or according to need.
- Protect the wound area from rubbing or unnecessary movement.
- Remove the gauze pad carefully. If the gauze has adhered to the wound, soak it with water before you remove it.
- Clean the wound with clean water and protect it well. As the wound heals, apply general-purpose lotion if desired.

Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:
- the burn area is larger than your palm, blisters have formed or there is other damage
- the burn is on the face, genitals or joints
- the wound becomes infected, i.e., it begins to hurt more, burn or smell, and a fever rises
- the wound does not heal in 2 weeks
SINUSITIS

Symptoms
- Thick nasal discharge and post-nasal drip
- Acute pain and pressure in the cheek area especially when leaning over is a typical symptom, but does not occur in all cases
- Toothache in upper teeth and pressure behind the eyes can also occur
- It is not unusual for symptoms of pain and pressure in the cheeks to occur with a common cold. It is recommended that these kinds of mild symptoms should NOT be treated with antibiotics, as normal care of flu symptoms should suffice. Mild symptoms usually pass in the span of a few days.

Home care
- Nasal sprays and antihistamine products that contract the mucous membranes in the nose can relieve symptoms
- Rinse nasal cavities with a neti pot
- Drink plenty of liquids!
- Use anti-inflammatory (ibuprofen) and pain relief (paracetamol) products according to the instructions on the package leaflet

Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:
- there is severe pain
- fever continues for over five days
- your general condition weakens
- symptoms are not relieved despite home care

Sinusitis that requires a physician’s care usually develops a week after the onset of the flu at the earliest. Sinusitis that lasts less than a week does not require a physician's care and should not be treated with antibiotics. The large majority of sinusitis cases clear up without antibiotics.
TICKS

To avoid ticks, remember to use tall boots and long pants when moving about in long grass and outdoor terrain. Pull your socks up over your pant legs. Use light-coloured clothing so you are able to see the ticks better. Shake out your clothes before you go inside. Check your skin and remove any ticks that have attached themselves to your skin. Ticks can transfer to people from animal fur as well.

Home care
- Remove the tick by grabbing it with your fingers as close to your skin as possible and pulling it away from the skin. Take care not to crush the back part of the tick as you pull. Tweezers for removing ticks are available at your local pharmacy.
- Disinfect the bite area thoroughly with antiseptic.
- A cold compress or wrap can help with the swelling and pain, along with pain relief medicine if necessary.
- Monitor the skin for any symptoms that might develop. Redness around the bite is a normal reaction to an irritant and should clear up the same day.

Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:
- a circular outwardly-expanding rash at least 5 cm wide develops around the tick bite area or elsewhere on the body. The rash may also be universal in colour
- the tick bite is followed by fever, nausea, headaches, joint pain or stroke symptoms
LICE

It is difficult to see head lice with the human eye. A fine-toothed lice comb can be used to comb the hair over a piece of white paper. Any lice that are combed out of the hair are then easy to see. A lice diagnosis can also be made if only lice eggs are found. Lice combs (also known as nit combs) are available at your local pharmacy.

Symptoms

- Head lice bite the surface of the scalp and cause itchiness
- Scratching that ensues leads easily to a bacterial skin infection

Home care

- Lice shampoo
  - When washing with a lice shampoo, it is recommended that the shampoo be left on the head for 10 minutes to have an effect.
  - Shampoo treatment is then repeated a week later.
  - It is forbidden to use the chemical Permethrin, found in many shampoos, on children younger than six months old.
  - The pesticide Malathion is only suitable for children over two years of age.
  - A Malathion solution that is massaged into hair and washed out with shampoo 12 hours later can also be used to treat lice. The user limitations are the same as for shampoos carrying Malathion.
  - Medicated lotions
    - Lotions for treating lice are massaged into the hair and scalp and left on for a time stated in the instructions, after which the hair is washed with normal shampoo.
    - Treatment is repeated if necessary in 7-10 days.
    - The effectiveness of the silicon compounds in the lotion is based on their ability to suffocate the lice and their eggs.
    - The silicone compounds are physical insecticides and therefore safe for persons of all ages, also during pregnancy and breastfeeding.
    - A fine-toothed lice comb can be used to remove the eggs.
    - Wash all headgear and bedclothes in 60°C water with laundry detergent.
    - Those items of clothing and other objects that cannot be washed must be placed in an airtight plastic bag for two weeks, during which period the head lice will die. A second choice is to place all of the things that cannot be washed into the freezer for 24 hours.
    - Even though the species of lice that preys on humans does not thrive in animal fur, the family dog should nevertheless be washed with a lice shampoo intended for animals.

Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:

- a rash develops on the scalp
- symptoms are not relieved despite home care

REMEMBER TO INFORM YOUR DAY CARE FACILITY AND SCHOOL! Contact the school nurse for cases involving school-age children!
EYE INFECTION

An eye infection, also known as conjunctivitis, can appear for several reasons. An eye infection (redness, discharge, stinging) can often accompany a runny nose and may linger for a few days after the runny nose has passed, but cases such as these heal on their own, with time, and do not require the attention of a health professional.

Symptoms
- Eye redness and/or stinging
- A tough, stringy discharge
- Lids may stick together due to discharge
- Watery eyes

Home care
- A mild eye infection will heal on its own in a few days, without antibiotics.
- Remove any discharge from the eyes:
  - Use clean cotton balls or swabs with water that has been boiled and left to cool
  - After washing the hands thoroughly with soap, clean the eye with slow swipes from the outside corner towards the nose. Use a new clean gauze pad or cotton ball for each swipe.
- Perform a thorough cleaning of the eye three times a day or more if needed.
- Removing the discharge inhibits the growth and spread of more bacteria.

Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:
- eyes become painful or sensitive to the light
- the area around the eyes becomes swollen
- vision becomes weak
- the infection does not clear up in a few days
SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES

Sexually transmitted diseases are largely the result of sexual behaviour. The most common sexually transmitted diseases are:

- chlamydia
- genital warts
- syphilis
- gonorrhoea
- genital herpes
- HIV infection, AIDS

Sometimes yeast infections, scabies and Hepatitis B are also classified as sexually transmitted diseases.

Symptoms

- Any sexually transmitted disease can be symptom-free at first. Sometimes an infected person can be symptom-free for years.
- Pain upon urination and/or lower abdomen pain
- Urinal tract discharge
- Sores on genitals

Care

- The earlier the disease is diagnosed, the better the treatment results. Antibiotics can be used to treat chlamydia, syphilis and gonorrhoea. There is no cure for an HIV infection, but today’s medication can slow the progress of infection and lengthen the symptom-free period.

Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:

- you experience a stinging feeling when urinating, urinal tract discharge or sores on your genitals. Symptoms such as these necessitate the attention of a health professional within a day or two!
- if you have had unprotected sexual contact and suspect that you have been infected with a sexually transmitted disease, it is enough that you seek out medical attention within a week's time.

If you suspect that you have been infected with a sexually transmitted disease, use a condom to prohibit further spread of the infection. Always use a condom in short-term relationships! When used properly, a condom protects you from sexually transmitted diseases. Note that sexually transmitted diseases can also be spread via oral and anal sex!
SCABIES

Scabies are a contagious skin infection caused by a 0.3-0.5 mm mite. The infection is transmitted by direct skin-to-skin contact. A single female mite is enough to launch an infection. Shaking hands or other short forms of contact is not sufficient time for mites to transfer from one to another, but it is plausible that a person can be infected with scabies from the sheets or clothes of another infected person, as the female mite can live 1-2 days outside of the skin. Mite species that infest humans do not transfer to animals, or visa-versa. A female mite can live under the host's skin for a month, during which time it lays 60-90 eggs in tunnels it burrows under the skin. Itching begins 3-6 weeks after infection, after the human body has had time to create an antibody to the mites and their excretion.

Symptoms
- Itching at night
- As the itching and scratching continues, 0.5-1 cm tunnels become apparent under the skin between fingers, in the palms and wrists and on the bottoms of feet of small children. The mite itself is distinguishable as a small grey dot at the end of the tunnel

Home care
- If someone in close contact to you, or in your day care or school has been diagnosed with scabies or if the symptoms in your family match those of scabies, it is recommended that you begin treatment at home. The attention of a health professional is rarely necessary.
- Your local pharmacy sells an over-the-counter cream containing Permethrin. A 30-gram tube is enough for one adult treatment. Half a tube is enough for treating children under ten.
- After a thorough washing from head to toe, apply the cream evenly at night to every part of your body, including your genital areas and between your fingers and toes.
- Take care not to spread the cream on mucous membranes, i.e., nostrils, lips, eyelids, ears, genital linings and the anus.
- Wash the skin thoroughly in the morning and change your underclothes and sheets.
- Any family members who are experiencing itching must be treated again in a week.
- One treatment is enough for family members without symptoms.
- It is important to treat all household members at the same time, regardless of whether they exhibit symptoms. In this way, you can prevent ‘ping-pong’ scabies, where a person without symptoms who has not been treated transfers the infection back to other members of the family after a few weeks.
- There is no need to undergo intensive cleaning or disinfection operations in a home that has had scabies. Clothes that can be washed easily, like outdoor jackets and pants for example, can be washed in a normal cycle. It is enough to not use the same clothing for more than a day or subject them to heat treatment as recommended in the medication’s package leaflet.

Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:
- home care does not reduce itchiness in 2-3 weeks, or the itching starts in again after a few weeks

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WARTS, see also Corns and calluses and Molluscum

Warts are non-cancerous growths that appear on the skin and mucous membranes. Warts are typically found on the hands and the soles of feet, rising up from the skin in a small rough lump.

Symptoms
- At first the wart is a flesh-coloured lump that grows and turns rough. Older and larger warts tend to split and can become very painful.
- There are two types of warts that appear on the bottom of the foot: individual warts that grow as lumps on the skin, and 'planter warts', i.e., small warts that grow inwards next to each other over an area several centimetres in size.
- On hands, warts often spread to the tissues surrounding the fingernails.
- Nail biting and picking at the cuticle encourages the formation of warts near the fingernails.
- Warts that form near the mouth, eyelids or nostrils are often thread-like in nature.

Home care
- The large majority of warts go away of their own accord over the span of two years.
- Most wart treatments contain salicylic acid; some also contain lactic acid. Wart treatments are available from your local pharmacy as plasters (salicylic or corn and callus plasters), drops, gels or creams.
- A piece the size of the wart is cut from the plaster, placed over the wart and fastened down with an adhesive plaster. A salicylic plaster should be changed every 2-3 days (see package leaflet for more detailed instructions).
- Drops, gels and creams should be used daily.
- A liquid nitrogen aerosol for treating warts, also available from your local pharmacy, can speed up wart degeneration, but it will not be effective in the treatment of planter warts on the soles of feet.
- Sometimes people choose to place a piece of duct tape on top of the warts (just as you would a plaster) and change it regularly until the wart is gone. This can suffice for treatment.

Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:
- the planter warts on the soles of your feet make it hard for you to walk and move around or the warts on your hands become painful.
CONSTIPATION

Constipation is a common ailment. Constipation in adults can be caused by several things, like dehydration, a side effect of medication, poor fibre intake and a lack of exercise.

Symptoms

- Intestinal function lessens and/or becomes difficult in relation to the norm

Home care

- Drink 1-2 glasses of water every morning on an empty stomach and before meals. Drink plenty of fluids, at least two litres of water a day, to soften your stools.
- Eat regularly and chew your food thoroughly.
- Make sure foods rich in fibre, like whole-grain products and vegetables, are part of your diet. In addition, eating prunes, figs and porridge can be of assistance in treating constipation.
- Move and exercise in order to stimulate your bowels.
- Use the bathroom regularly.
- Several over-the-counter products are available at your local pharmacy that can help with constipation, like stool-softening powders, granular and liquid solutions and mini suppositories. Your pharmacy can provide you with more information regarding the safe and proper way to use these products.

Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:

- constipation sets in quickly, there is noticeable pain during bowel movements, or there is blood in your stool
- there are other symptoms besides those associated with constipation, like constant fatigue, strange stomach pain, nausea, vomiting, a fever or diarrhoea
- Symptoms continue and home care provides no relief
STOMACH FLU

NAUSEA/VOMITING

Nausea and vomiting are normal symptoms that everyone experiences at some point in their life. Almost all illnesses that are characterized by sudden vomiting or diarrhoea pass of their own accord in 1-3 days.

Symptoms
- The most common reason vomiting begins is a sudden intestinal infection. Vomiting begins without warning and is usually violent, consisting of the normal contents of one's stomach or green bile-mixed liquid. Vomiting is usually accompanied by watery diarrhoea, stomach cramps and sometimes a fever.
- Signs of dehydration: decreased urination, dry tongue and skin, weak general condition and sunken eyes.

Home care
- Make sure to drink plenty of liquids. Drink something (e.g., diluted fruit juice) in small doses frequently, a decilitre at a time or a spoonful every 10 minutes, for example. It is recommended that the liquids are cold.
- If drinking increases the rate of vomiting, wait a few hours and try again.
- Vomiting for a day or two does presents a danger of dehydration, even if liquids have been drunk.
- Try sucking on an ice cube or a juice popsicle.
- It is very important that you monitor your hydration levels during illnesses with vomiting.
- Dehydration can be reduced with hydration powders available in your local pharmacy. Hydration powders contain the necessary micronutrients to support proper hydration and calm the intestines. Ask your pharmacy for more information.

Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:
- vomiting was preceded by an accident of some kind
- vomiting results in a weak general condition
- you are not able to drink enough, vomit liquids up immediately or show signs of dehydration
- there is severe pain
- you have an illness, like diabetes, in which your insulin levels do not stay normal
- symptoms continue and home care offers no relief

Remember small children and the elderly always require more urgent care!
DIARRHOEA

The most common reason for the onset of diarrhoea is a virus, and the diarrhoea should pass of its own accord. Antibiotics may also be to blame, as they disturb natural intestinal bacteria levels. For this reason, it is a good idea to also take lactic acid bacteria products when you are taking antibiotics.

Symptoms
- Typically loose or watery stools for 24 hours
- Temporary stomach pain, nausea and vomiting
- Signs of dehydration: decreased urination, dry tongue and skin, weak general condition and sunken eyes

Home care
- Maintain good hygiene and wash your hands thoroughly!
- Make sure you drink enough, but avoid sugary drinks. Adults with stomach flu need to drink more than 3 litres of liquids per day while they are ill.
- Diluted juice, water, mineral water, tea, berry soups and meat or vegetable broths are all suitable.
- Drink a spoonful of cold water every 5-10 minutes if nothing else will stay down.
- Dehydration can also be reduced with hydration powders available in your local pharmacy. Hydration powders contain the necessary micronutrients to support proper hydration and calm your intestines.
- Products containing lactic acid bacteria, available at your local pharmacy, are also recommended.
- Eat food that is light and breaks down easily, like salads, chicken or fish, and hard breads.

Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:
- children or the elderly come down with a severe case of diarrhoea. They are at high risk of dehydration which can be life-threatening
- the general condition of the ill person weakens
- stools have blood in them
- there is severe pain
- you have an illness, like diabetes, in which your insulin levels do not stay normal
- you are not able to drink enough liquids and begin to show signs of dehydration
- you have recently returned from a trip abroad
- the diarrhoea has lasted for over a week
- you were recently prescribed with a round of antibiotics and fever and diarrhoea began at that time or afterwards

Remember small children and the elderly always require more urgent care!
STRAINED MUSCLES OR TENDONS

In muscle or tendon strains, the muscle fibres around a joint are pulled or partially torn. The primary concern is immediate care. The strained area can swell and be painful at first.

Acute care: The I.C.E. steps
- **Ice** – Hold ice or a cold compress on the injured area. Never place ice directly onto the skin as it may freeze the skin and cause further damage.
- **Compression** – Wrap the strained area with an elastic bandage to reduce swelling. Use the wrap for a few days, but avoid wrapping the area too tight.
- **Elevation** – Keep the strained area elevated and close to the level of the heart to decrease swelling.

Further care
- Use anti-inflammatory or pain relief medicine if needed as instructed in the package leaflet.
- Start exercising the area as soon as it is possible without pain (normally 1-3 weeks from the injury).

Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:
- there is severe pain that cannot be relieved
- supporting/elevating the limb proves impossible
- there is excessive swelling in the limb
- symptoms continue and home care does not provide relief
CHICKENPOX

Chickenpox is a highly contagious disease with fever caused by an infection with the *varicella zoster* virus. The virus is an airborne disease, which spreads easily through coughing or sneezing. People with chickenpox are contagious 1-2 days before the rash appears and 5 days after. The germination period after exposure is 14-21 days. It usually begins as a rash, with red itchy dots appearing on the body. Some of these quickly turn into blisters that over the course of two days cloud over, burst or deflate in the centre and then scab over. New dots normally appear for 3-4 days. (As the rash sets in or the day before, many children also exhibit other general symptoms, like fever, cough, loss of appetite and fatigue.) Chickenpox symptoms can also remain very mild, with only a few blisters appearing on the skin. Once the disease has progressed to the scabbing phase, it is no longer contagious. *An effective inoculation is now available against this disease.*

Symptoms

- Fever as the rash sets in
- Itchy blisters
- Blisters may form in the mouth
- Headache
- Cough
- Loss of appetite
- Fatigue on the day the rash sets in or the day before

Home care

- Chickenpox usually heals of its own accord in 1-2 weeks.
- Children should be cared for at home for 5-6 days or until all the blisters have dried and scabbed over.
- Anti-inflammatory and pain relief medication can be used to lower the fever, along with light clothing and a cool room temperature.
- Try not to scratch the blisters; trim the fingernails and use gloves at night, if necessary.
- Antihistamine products can be given orally to help with the itching.
- An over-the-counter lotion for treating chickenpox is available from your local pharmacy to help with the itching. Do not use lotions containing cortisone.

Contact the Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:

- you have not had chickenpox, you are pregnant and you have been in contact with someone who has chickenpox
- you have just given birth and you and/or the baby are showing symptoms
- the itchiness is overwhelming and lotions from the pharmacy are of no help
- if deemed necessary, a physician can prescribe medication to relieve the itchiness
- the blisters and scabs on the skin look infected, i.e., they are very red, burn and/or leak discharge
- fever rises for a second time
- symptoms are not relieved despite home care
URINAL TRACT INFECTION IN ADULTS

Urinal tract infections, also known as bladder infections, are one of the most common bacterial infections. They appear most frequently in women and the elderly.

Symptoms
- Frequent urge to urinate
- Burning with urination
- Fever
- Lower back or abdomen pain
- Nausea and vomiting
- Blood in the urine

Home care
- Drink plenty of liquids, e.g., cranberry or lingonberry juice or water.
- Take pain relief medication as needed.
- Empty the bladder frequently (every 3-4 hours, after intercourse).
- Maintain good hygiene and wash your hands frequently.

Contact Emergency Health Care or your local health station if:
- symptoms are accompanied by a fever, lower back pain or a weak general condition
- symptoms are accompanied by nausea and vomiting
- you are currently undergoing radiation therapy or chemotherapy
- you have diabetes, are pregnant or breastfeeding
- elderly people with infections suddenly become disoriented
- the urine has blood in it
- children or males exhibit urinal tract infection symptoms
- symptoms continue despite a course of antibiotics
- symptoms are not relieved despite home care

If you are pregnant, contact your maternity clinic during office hours!