

WATCH  
OUT  
FOR THESE  
**4 COMMON  
SUMMER  
ILLNESSES**

BY SHASHWATHI SANDEEP

Here are a few common summer health woes and tips on how to beat them

Summer is the time when your child gets to spend more time outdoors than in front of the television. Unfortunately, this is also the season for various ailments like eczema and strep throat. But the good news is that with a few precautions, you can avoid these problems. Read on to find more about them:



**Food Poisoning**

Food poisoning is very common during summer. "One of the reasons is that because of the heat, the shelf life of food, especially milk products, is significantly reduced," says Dr Manish Mannan, Consultant and Coordinator, Paediatrics and Neonatology, Mother and Child Unit, Paras Hospitals, Gurgaon.

● **Symptoms:** "Common symptoms of food poisoning include loose motions, vomiting, and abdominal cramps. Fever may occur in certain cases," he adds.

◆ **Treatment:** In case your child has such symptoms, give her small sips of oral rehydration solution (ORS) and consult a paediatrician. If the symptoms are severe, the child may even require hospitalization.

♥ **Prevention:** Avoid eating food from roadside vendors and teach your child to always wash hands before eating.



**Strep throat**

Strep throat is a bacterial infection that causes inflammation and pain in the throat. This common condition is caused by group A streptococcus bacteria. Strep throat is especially common in children between the ages of 5-15 years.

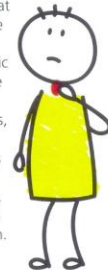
● **Symptoms:** "The severity of strep throat can vary from person to person. Common symptoms of strep throat include a sudden fever, sore throat (red throat with white patches), headache, chills and trouble swallowing," says Dr Amin Kitekar, Consultant Paediatrician, Kohinoor Hospital, Mumbai. Symptoms of strep throat typically develop within five days of exposure to the bacteria.

◆ **Treatment:** If your child is diagnosed with strep throat, your doctor will prescribe an antibiotic to treat the infection. Penicillin and amoxicillin are the most common medications for a strep infection. It is important that your child completes the antibiotic treatment course to kill the infection. Some people stop taking their medication when

symptoms improve, which can trigger a relapse.

In addition to antibiotics, several home-care treatments can improve the symptoms of strep throat. These remedies include drinking warm liquids (lemon water and hot teas), drinking cold liquids to help numb the throat, turning on a cool-mist humidifier, taking over-the-counter pain relievers such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen, sucking on throat lozenges, and adding 1/2 teaspoon of salt to 1 cup of water and gargling with the mixture.

♥ **Prevention:** If you suspect that your child has strep throat, he needs to avoid contact with other people until at least 48 hours have lapsed from the start of an antibiotic treatment. Because the strep bacteria can live on surfaces, you should throw away toothbrushes and pacifiers once your child is better. This is necessary to avoid a re-infection.



## Eczema

Eczema, a dry skin condition, occurs due to genetic predisposition. Often, environmental factors may trigger the flare-ups. During summer, frequent baths in chlorinated water, exposure to heat, humidity and certain sunscreens can make children's skin dry.

● **Symptoms:** "Patches of itchy, dry skin will be seen on the neck, face, hands and legs. When scratched, open sores with crusts may develop and become infected. Eczema can be itchy enough to cause sleep disturbances in your child. Often children having eczema or dry skin, are sensitive to certain foods," says Dr Kalpana Damodaran, Paediatrician and Neonatologist, Apollo Specialty Hospital, Vanagaram.

◆ **Treatment:** Children with eczema should bathe in water with emollients. Use moisturizing soaps. "Apply skin moisturizers, especially oily preparations with liquid

and soft white paraffin, as frequently as possible to keep the skin moist and soft. The first application should be soon after a bath," he adds.

For severe eczema, steroid creams and paraffin gauze dressings are helpful. Antihistamines are useful for sedation at night and to reduce itching. "Children with eczema should have their nails clipped regularly as scratching can lead to bleeding and invite secondary bacterial infection, which is difficult to treat. In infants with severe eczema, eliminating cow's milk from the diet often helps," says Dr Damodaran.

♥ **Prevention:** There is no definite preventive measure. But eczema can be controlled in children by regular application of moisturizers and a careful selection of sunscreen lotions. Before you buy skin creams, consult your paediatrician about your choice, or take his advice.



## Swimmer's Ear

Swimmer's Ear is an infection of the ear canal outside the eardrum. This commonly occurs in swimmers because of retained moisture in the ear canal. Children also get it when they bathe in pools with high bacterial count, like ponds or lakes.

● **Symptoms:** "The infection may cause mild to severe pain, swelling of the ear canal and an itch in the ear. At times, there is also a discharge," says Dr Damodaran.

◆ **Treatment:** Anti-bacterial/anti-fungal ear drops, painkillers and sometimes steroids are used to reduce the swelling.

♥ **Prevention:** The child should avoid swimming until the infection is cleared. He should use ear plugs made of cotton that are soaked in petroleum jelly before swimming. "Avoid cleaning the ear canal with cotton swabs or pins as these may erode the protective lining of the ear. Gently dry the ear with a hair dryer on low setting or tip your child's ear to the side on a towel to drain the water after swimming. Avoid earphones and hearing aids during an infection," adds Dr Damodaran. ●



## 6 Ways to stay healthy during summer

**Kanchan Naikawadi**  
Preventive Healthcare Expert and Director, Indus Health Plus, Pune suggests the following tips for kids to stay healthy during summer

Encourage your child to play outdoor games either early in the morning or once the heat of the day settles down.

If your child is going for a swim, clean and dry her ears properly after the swim.

Unnecessary touching of the face and eyes should be discouraged. Again, washing hands from time to time is important.

If your child intends playing in the sun, she should wear clothes that absorb sweat; she needs to freshen up and change clothes once the game is over.

Encourage your child to wash his hands before he eats anything. Only freshly prepared and hygienically stored food should be given.

To keep asthmatic children away from triggers, staying indoors during the day is advisable.