

Personal health

Being prepared and knowing the signs

Managing their own personal health and making sure they are registered with and are using local health services means they will be able to cope with common illnesses and to also know when they might have the signs of something more serious.

Health tips

- 1.** Register with a local GP, dentist and optician.
- 2.** Use your local pharmacy. Pharmacists are highly trained health professionals, can advise them on many health issues and will also let them know if they need to see their GP or other health professional.
- 3.** Keep a small supply of useful medicines at home. Make sure they always follow instructions carefully, always take these with parental/carers advice and direction and check use by dates. Remember staff at school cannot give students medicine unless this has been agreed and they have a specific health care plan in place in school. Their school nurse can help draw this up if required.
- 4.** Use local sexual health services.
www.swish.nhs.uk/sutton-and-merton/sexual-healthservices
- 5.** Register for a C Card which will enable them to pick up free condoms.
www.gettingiton.org.uk/services/sutton/c-card-scheme
- 6.** Getting a good night's sleep is essential for their body and mind. Developing a regular bedtime routine can help them form some healthy sleep habits and make sure they are well rested. They need to aim to go to bed the same time each night and avoid screens (laptops, TVs and mobile phones) for an hour before they go to sleep as the type of light these devices emit can stop them getting to sleep easily.
- 7.** Make taking showers/baths, brushing their teeth, cleaning and drying their clothes and using deodorant a part of their personal hygiene routine.
- 8.** Make sure their immunisations are up to date. They may need a new meningitis booster if they are 17 or 18. Check this with their GP.

Common illnesses and conditions

Coughs and colds

There are some good things about catching a few coughs and colds - it helps build-up their natural defences and fight off viruses. Most bugs will run their course without doing any real harm because they are viruses which get better on their own. However, there are things they can do at home to help:

- Drink lots of fluids.
- Try paracetamol or ibuprofen - always check the label for the correct information (children under 16 should not take aspirin).

If symptoms persist for more than a few days they must visit their pharmacist or GP.

Stomach upsets

Gastroenteritis can be caused by a virus or food poisoning, and is relatively common.

Most cases resolve themselves within a few days, without the need for medical treatment. Ensure they drink plenty of water so that they don't become dehydrated. Be extra careful with hand hygiene (use soap and water and dry hands well).

If the gastroenteritis lasts for more than three or four days, get advice from a health professional, such as their GP or pharmacist.

Headaches

Headaches are quite common and most headaches are not due to a serious health problem. They can be brought on by skipping meals, not getting enough sleep, using computers, tablets or mobile devices for a long time without breaks and occasionally from playing sport which can make them dehydrated. Sometimes headaches can be the result of stress.

They can often be the result of stress or visual problems and can be avoided by making sure they get enough food, drink and sleep. Most headaches can be treated at home with paracetamol or ibuprofen. Always check the label for the correct dosage.

Encourage them to visit the optician if they feel that their vision is causing the problem. Vision check ups are free to school age children. If their symptoms do not resolve please get them to visit the GP.

Acne

Around 80% of teenagers get some form of acne and there are many myths about what causes it. Acne consists of spots and painful bumps on the skin. It's most noticeable on the face, but can also appear on the back, shoulders

and buttocks. Severe acne can cause scarring, so it is important to get treated. Acne is mostly due to the way skin reacts to hormonal changes. Cases of teenage acne are thought to be triggered by increased levels of a hormone called testosterone that occurs during puberty. Treatments are available from their pharmacy but if there is no improvement, they should visit their GP who can assess how bad their acne is and discuss the options with them. If acne is severe, their GP can refer them to a dermatologist (an expert in treating skin conditions). Treatments can take between two to three months to work but, once they do, the results are usually effective.

www.nhs.uk/Conditions
www.nhs.uk/livewell

Contacts

www.nhs.uk/Conditions
www.nhs.uk/livewell
111.nhs.uk or call 111.