

We're Not Kidding Around: Pediatric Emergencies

This article aims to help you become more aware of some common pediatric emergencies. Whether you're spending the day with your grandchildren, babysitting, or just hanging out with your favourite kiddo, emergencies can happen. Bottom line: please always call for help if you're unsure!

Gastrointestinal Upset

Most bouts of **vomiting and diarrhea** in children are due to a viral infection and self-limiting. However, it can lead to fluid loss and dehydration. Signs of dehydration include lethargy, crying with no tears, dry mouth, less urine, and sunken eyes. Calling 811 for nursing advice on rehydration is a great way to stay safe. This can be prevented by washing hands and staying home when sick. Signs that might point away from a viral cause is green vomit, bloody stools, and a tummy that looks abnormally stretched. These could signify a blockage in the gastrointestinal tract and require urgent medical care.

Shortness of Breath

There are many causes of shortness of breath from a minor infection to severe anaphylaxis. Here are some common and notable causes in children:

Asthma can present as shortness of breath usually accompanied by wheezing and coughing. First thing is to make sure the child gets their inhaler, aka "puffer"! Inhalers such as Ventolin/salbutamol (the blue one) help to dilate the airways and get more air into the lungs. If your child has never been diagnosed with asthma before and experiencing the aforementioned symptoms, call 911 and get them to a hospital/medical center ASAP.

Croup is a viral infection with a distinctive "barky" cough (think seal), hoarseness, and fever. Most cases are mild but it is important to make sure the child is breathing properly and getting enough oxygen. Medications called steroids can help decrease inflammation and open up the airway in severe cases. **Epiglottitis** is a rare but serious bacterial infection of the throat leading to swelling and narrowing of the airway. Common symptoms are fever, drooling, troubles breathing/swallowing, and a muffled cough. Any child with these symptoms should go to emergency right away. Thankfully, the incidence of epiglottitis has decreased with routine childhood immunizations.

And of course, **COVID and Pneumonia** can also cause various severe respiratory symptoms.

Accidents, Falls, Ingestions

Accidents happen, especially with children who are constantly on the go. Whether it's falling or accidentally eating something, the most important part of dealing with accidents is prevention. This means proper supervision and protective gear, such as wearing a helmet when biking or a life jacket when boating/swimming. Make sure any potentially dangerous pills/chemicals/substances are locked away and in child-safe containers. If a child ingests

something potentially toxic, or if you're unsure, get them to a medical center right away and call BC Poison Control. Keep their number on your fridge and phone:



Calling 811 for more information on any health concerns and taking a First Aid/CPR course is an excellent way of preparing yourself, especially when living in a rural community.

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