



Viral Infections in Children



Overview

Viral infections are common in children of all ages. But what are viruses, exactly? And what do I need to know to keep my child safe?

Viruses

A virus is a very small package of genetic material in a protein shell. It's much smaller than a bacterium or a fungus. When it enters a living cell, it takes control. It forces the cell to make copies of the virus. The copies burst out of the cell and infect other cells. They also spread from one person to another.

What happens when my child gets a virus

What happens when a child gets a virus? Well, often it's not that serious. Common colds are caused by viruses. So are many sore throats and lung infections. But some viral infections are much more severe. Influenza is a widespread, common virus that can be deadly for young children.

Protecting your child

So how do I protect my child against viruses? Some can be prevented with vaccines. For example, there are vaccines for measles, mumps, rubella, chickenpox and influenza. So be sure to keep your child's vaccinations up-to-date. Also, help your child avoid viruses by keeping your child away from sick people. And, teach your child to wash their hands often. Good hygiene helps stop the spread of viruses.

Conclusion

For more information about your child's health, talk to your doctor.