

## Introduction

If you work with young children you understand the importance of keeping every child healthy and safe. This handbook will help you by providing up-to-date information on health, safety, and development issues. The Good Health Handbook is **a good resource for all types of child care programs and schools** working with and caring for young children.

The Good Health Handbook has been revised and updated and it includes much of the information you will need about injury prevention, infection control, childhood conditions, illnesses, infestations, and injuries. It contains information on the importance of developing policies for your program, as well as sample policies. There is also helpful information on the importance of good nutrition, physical activity, outdoor time, child development, guiding children's behavior, and working with families. Many of the additions and revisions are based on the suggestions and requests from those who use the Good Health Handbook.

The information in this handbook has been carefully researched and reviewed. Recommendations are made only if there is good evidence that it will help protect the health and safety of the children in your care and their families. However, **this book is only a guideline to follow and is in no way intended to replace the recommendations of health care providers.**

The 2015 revised edition of the *Good Health Handbook: A Guide for Those Caring for Children* was developed by a dedicated group of early childhood and health professionals with funding and support provided by the Department of Human Services Child Care Services, and the Oklahoma State Department of Health Maternal and Child Health Service.

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## Common Health Myths

There are some “*common health myths*” that many of us have heard growing up and we continue to hear from family members, friends, and even early childhood and health professionals. To help you provide high quality care for children here are some straight answers to many of those myths.

**Myth:** Cold weather makes you sick.

**The truth is:** You may feel uncomfortable, but cold air doesn’t make you sick. *Germs make you sick*. Studies have shown that people who are chilled are no more likely to get sick than those who are not. It may be that cold weather keeps people indoors, where germs are more likely to catch up with you. **TAKE THE CHILDREN OUTSIDE for fresh air!**

**Myth:** If you go outside with wet hair, you’ll catch a cold.

**The truth is:** You may feel cold or uncomfortable, but will be just fine health-wise.

**Myth:** Putting cotton balls in your ears protects you from an infection.

**The truth is:** The cotton actually helps trap moisture and provides a better growth medium for a bacterial infection.

**Myth:** You lose most of your body heat through your head.

**The truth is:** There is nothing special about the head and heat loss. Heat escapes from any exposed area, so putting on gloves or mittens is as important as a hat.

**Myth:** Green mucus (snot) means a child has something worse than a cold.

**The truth is:** The importance of mucus color is a medical myth that even some doctors believe. Clear mucus is most common, but green or yellow could be temporary, or a symptom of a cold.

**Myth:** Herbal remedies such as echinacea and licorice root are safe and helpful to a sick child.

**The truth is:** Few herbal remedies have undergone rigorous testing and could in fact harm a child.

**Myth:** All ear infections need to be treated with antibiotics.

**The truth is:** About 80 percent of ear infections will clear up on their own, and overuse of antibiotics has led to bacteria developing resistance to the drugs. Therefore many doctors are taking a “wait and see” approach.

**Myth:** Feed a cold, starve a fever.

**The truth is:** All sick children, whether feverish or sniffing, need nutrients. If they don’t feel like eating solid food, make sure they get plenty of soup, juice, and other healthy soft foods and liquids. Staying hydrated is the most important thing.

**Myth:** A flu shot will make you sick.

**The truth is:** A flu shot **cannot** cause illness. Flu vaccine administered by a needle is made in two ways. The vaccine is made with flu vaccine viruses that have been ‘inactivated’ and are not infectious, or with no flu vaccine viruses at all.

**Myth:** Vaccines cause autism.

**The truth is:** Vaccines do not cause autism. Science fails to show a link between vaccines and autism. In recent years, there has been a shift in the definition of autism, which makes it seem like rates have increased. Autism is now recognized as a 'spectrum disorder' with many more mild cases that were previously never classified as "autism."

**Myth:** Vaccines are not necessary because we have good hygiene and sanitation.

**The truth is:** The diseases we can vaccinate against will return if we stop vaccination programs. Better hygiene, hand washing and clean water help protect people from infectious diseases, but many infections can spread regardless of how clean we are. If people are not vaccinated, diseases that have become uncommon in the U.S., such as polio and measles, will quickly reappear.

**Myth:** Too many shots weaken the immune system.

**The truth is:** Each dose allows the body to mount an immune response and make antibodies to fight off an infection if one showed up.

**Myth:** To get rid of hiccups, have someone startle you.

**The truth is:** Most home remedies, like holding your breath or drinking from a glass of water backward have not been proven effective. However swallowing one teaspoon of white granulated sugar has been proven effective 95% of the time.

**Myth:** Sugar makes children hyperactive.

**The truth is:** Sugar does not cause hyperactivity. There are many other health-related reasons not to consume a lot of sugar. (However it has been proven to get rid of hiccups – see above).

**Myth:** Cracking your knuckles will cause arthritis.

**The truth is:** Knuckle crackers are no more likely to have arthritis than those who don't make annoying popping sounds with their fingers, but there are reasons to stop this habit. Knuckle crackers are more likely to have weaker grip strength and greater hand swelling.

**Myth:** Gum stays in your stomach for seven years.

**The truth is:** Like most nonfood objects that children swallow, fluids carry gum through the intestinal tract, and within days it passes.

**Myth:** The 5-second rule – if food dropped on the floor is picked up quickly it is safe to eat.

**The truth is:** Scientists put the 5-second rule to the test. They found that food that comes into contact with tile, wood, and carpeted floors picks up large amounts of bacteria. Throw it out!

**Myth:** Sitting too close to the TV will damage a child's eyes.

**The truth is:** Sitting in front of the TV or a computer screen for hours may have a negative effect on your child's brain development, but it will not damage their eyes. If a child is sitting too close to the TV or the computer screen, it may be a sign the child needs to have an eye exam.

**Myth:** Eating lots of carrots will improve a child's eyesight.

**The truth is:** Carrots contain carotene (which becomes Vitamin A), a key ingredient in good overall nutrition, however eating a lot of them will not improve your eyesight.

**Myth:** Teething sometimes causes high fevers, diaper rash, diarrhea, or ear infections.

**The truth is:** Although teething causes discomfort and some studies have linked it to low-grade fever, teething does not cause a high fever, diaper rash, diarrhea, or ear infections.

**Myth:** Wounds need fresh air to heal.

**The truth is:** A covered wound will heal faster, with less scarring, than an uncovered one. An ordinary bandage holds in the moisture, which prevents the skin from drying out and scabbing over. Scabs slow down the healing process by creating a barrier between healthy cells and the damaged cells that need repair.

**Myth:** Pets spread head lice.

**The truth is:** Animals are not known to carry head lice or transmit them to people.

**Myth:** A lice infestation means you are 'dirty'.

**The truth is:** Personal cleanliness and family income have nothing to do with having or transmitting head lice. "The head louse is an equal-opportunity pest."

**Myth:** Kids with lice or nits should be sent home immediately.

**The truth is:** The American Academy of Pediatrics does not endorse a 'no-nit' policy that excludes children from school because nits are present.

**Myth:** Lice and bed bugs carry diseases.

**The truth is:** Head lice and bed bugs do not cause or spread diseases.

**Myth:** Bed bugs live in dirty places.

**The truth is:** Anyone can get bed bugs. Unsanitary conditions will not cause bed bugs, but getting rid of clutter will help reduce the number of places bed bugs can live and hide.

**Myth:** Bed bugs can't be seen with the naked eye.

**The truth is:** Bed bugs are small but can be seen. Young bed bugs are about the size of a poppy seed and mature ones are about the size of an apple seed.

**Myth:** If a baby spits up while sleeping on its back it will choke.

**The truth is:** Babies can keep their airways open better when on their backs. The wind pipe is above the food pipe when babies are on their backs, so it would be difficult for vomit or spit-up to travel against gravity.

**Myth:** Baby's bottle must be warmed.

**The truth is:** It's perfectly safe to serve a baby a cold bottle.

**Myth:** Infants need water supplements.

**The truth is:** Healthy babies **do not** need extra water. Breast milk and formula provide all the fluids they need. On hot days, infants receiving human milk in a bottle can be given additional human milk in a bottle but should not be given water, especially in the first six months of life. Infants receiving formula in a bottle can be given additional formula in a bottle.

Resources:

[www.parents.com](http://www.parents.com)

[www.chla.org](http://www.chla.org)

[www.rd.com/advice/child-health-myths-every-parent-should-know](http://www.rd.com/advice/child-health-myths-every-parent-should-know)

<http://liparentonline.com>

[http://spryliving.com/articles.kids-health-myths/](http://spryliving.com/articles/kids-health-myths/)

[www.foxnews.com/health/2013/08/17/12myths-and-facts-about-vaccines/](http://www.foxnews.com/health/2013/08/17/12myths-and-facts-about-vaccines/)

<http://children.webmd.com>

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/misconceptions>

[www.epa.gov/bedbugs/](http://www.epa.gov/bedbugs/)

[www.babycenter.com](http://www.babycenter.com)

[www.healthtap.com](http://www.healthtap.com)

[www.nichd.nih.gov](http://www.nichd.nih.gov)

[www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org)

