

# Traditional Remedies for Childhood Illnesses

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MARCH 22, 2009 BY SARAH POPE ([HTTPS://WWW.WESTONAPRICE.ORG/AUTHOR/SPOPE/](https://www.westonaprice.org/author/slope/))

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Thomas Jefferson once said that if people let the government decide which foods they eat and which medicines they take into their bodies, they will find themselves in as sorry a state as the souls of those who live under tyranny.

From the moment our children are born, they are put on the cradle-to-grave medical path. The baby has to have the well-baby checkup and a slew of vaccinations. We are taught that if our children have the slightest sniffle or tummy ache, they should be taken to the doctor right away. Antibiotics and immunizations dominate the practice of modern medicine; dietary and herbal remedies, and plain old common sense, have been stuffed into the closet like a bunch of grandma's clothes, fusty and old-fashioned, not worth considering in this enlightened scientific age.

When we take the power back into our own hands as mothers and parents, and use the wisdom of home remedies to treat our children, we are adhering to that responsibility for health to which Thomas Jefferson referred. Instead of bequeathing the health of our children to a governmental body, parents need the knowledge and confidence to be primary caregivers.

My father is a doctor. He was an old-time country doctor who would make house calls in the middle of the night with his black bag. He was the kind of doctor you could call at two in the morning if your child had a fever of 105, and he would come over. Those doctors don't exist much any more. I grew up watching him practice medicine in a traditional way. Even though he was a conventional doctor, he still practiced very traditionally. When I was a little girl, I would often go on house calls, go to the hospital with him and make his rounds. A lot of my expertise comes from the wisdom I observed growing up watching my dad in his medical practice.

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# ADVANTAGES

On reflection, the advantages of home remedies are obvious. First of all they are non-toxic. Recently, we have been hearing about cold remedies pulled off pharmacy shelves. Some of them have been on sale for decades and suddenly in the last month or so we learn that these should not be given to children under six years old. That news was a shock even to myself,

jaded as I am about over-the-counter medicines and pharmaceutical drugs. At least with home remedies, you know you are not going to poison your children. These remedies are also low in cost. Many of the best home remedies don't cost any money at all.

Another advantage concerns speed of treatment. You don't have to call anybody or wait for a call back.

Home remedies prevent your child from being used as a guinea pig. With home remedies, your child is not going to be one of the statistics from a toxic over-the-counter medicine or a pharmaceutical drug that was never approved for children but is now prescribed for children—something that happens often these days.

Home remedies work with the immune system rather than suppressing it. Acute illness—manifesting as diarrhea, runny nose, vomiting, headache, and so forth—is actually good for your child. Managed properly, acute illness can give your child more vitality and prevent chronic illness—which is not good for your child.

Home care also strengthens the bond between parent and child. When my nine-year-old son is not feeling well, he comes to me and tells me how he feels. He trusts me, he knows I can make him feel better. He is not afraid of me. Most children are afraid of doctors. But they have a relationship with their parents and when their parents are able to make them feel better at a time when they are at their weakest and most vulnerable, the bond with their parents is strengthened.

With these advantages in mind, let's turn to some traditional remedies for common childhood illnesses.

## EAR INFECTIONS

Childhood ear infections are intimately connected to diet. Well-fed children do not get ear infections and breastfed children whose mothers have a good, traditional diet simply do not get ear infections. If you are breastfeeding and the your baby is getting ear infections, then you need to reexamine your own diet.

The most common dietary culprit is pasteurized milk—both in the infant and in the breastfeeding mother.

If, despite your best efforts, an ear infection occurs, a warm wheat bag on the ear provides

enormous pain relief. A warm wheat bag is made of fabric filled with plain unground wheat kernels—you can make your own if you want. These are widely used in Australia. The only reason we have ever used the microwave in our house is to heat the wheat bag. You put it in the microwave with 1/2 cup of water for a minute or two so that it becomes just hot to the touch. These are really comforting for the child.

Drops of warm olive oil in the ear provide relief although it may be difficult to get your children to agree to this.

Ear candling also provides relief. This is how we healed the double ear infection my son had at 15 months (this was before we discovered the WAPF diet). Ear candles don't really clean out your ear—that is misinformation—but they blow warm smoke into your ear that helps dry out any moisture that may be in there.

## Headaches

Many kids are getting them these days. Once again, diet plays a big role. If your child is eating right, he just won't get headaches. Headaches often occur when blood sugar is low, so three solid meals a day, with adequate animal protein and plenty of fat, form the basis of prevention. Avoid sugar and MSG—both will cause headaches.

The only time my children get headaches is when they are dehydrated—often after playing soccer. Coconut water, kombucha and other fermented drinks are the best way to rehydrate; they are much better than plain water. We use canned coconut water at sporting events. If none of these types of beverages is available, have your child drink plain water, but not more than two four-ounce drinks every 30 minutes; otherwise it will just go to the kidneys.

Another remedy is a mild cup of green tea, but this should only be used as a last resort. Small amounts of caffeine and caffeine-like substances found in tea can have a medicinal effect but obviously should not be given to children on a regular basis.

## Fevers

Many parents panic when their child has a fever. I did too the first time my child had a high fever. Rule number one: don't try to lower a fever, and certainly don't use Tylenol or ibuprofen.

It would be best if you just threw these drugs away. Instead of panicking, honor your child's fever—it is accomplishing important things in his body.

My father never brought down our fevers. I am one of seven children, so we had a lot of fevers. He taught me that bringing down a fever only prolonged the illness and weakened your vitality for the next illness to come. I remember him saying, "No, I can't bring down your fever because you'll get sicker quicker and next time it will be worse."

Repeated forced reduction of childhood fever has been linked to childhood cancer. And eliminating fever will usually cause a secondary infection. When you bring down a fever you start a domino effect toward antibiotic use. If you want to avoid antibiotics, don't bring down the fever. Fever reduction suppresses the immune system. Your child is trying to get well himself with the fever and when you bring it down you are opening him up to a secondary bacterial infection that will further entrench the virus or bacteria. It cannot be stressed enough that fever has an important role to play in your child's overall wellbeing.

Why do our bodies produce fever? One reason is that fevers slow down pathogens. The germ, bacteria or virus causing the child's distress wants to replicate every few minutes and the fever slows this process down. It slows down the spread and severity of the illness. So when you bring the fever down you are giving free license to the virus or bacteria to run amuck. And don't panic if your child's temperature gets to 102-103 degrees—this is the ideal range for a fever.

I find that holding your child is the best home remedy for fever. When they are feverish, they want to be with you. Put on a light robe and crash on the couch with your child and hold her for hours if you need to. If you let the fever go and just let the child's body do what it is trying to do, the fever won't last very long – just a few hours.

You can take their temperature if you want to, but it is not necessary. Put your lips on their forehead, and if the child seems hot, you know they have a fever. I can tell within a point or two what their temperature is. My dad taught me that—he never took our temperatures. He knew the temperature.

Sometimes a fever will go for three days. It will go up and down, with peaks and valleys, and it usually peaks about 4-6 in the afternoon. If your child has a fever in the afternoon followed by a good night's sleep and no fever in the morning, that doesn't mean he is over it. Don't send him to school until you know what happens at 4-6 in the afternoon. The fever is likely to come back

in a lot of cases. Until you've passed a late afternoon with no fever, your child is not yet on the road to recovery.

Should you feed or starve a fever? My father taught me that food will naturally drop a fever within about 20 minutes and this drop will last for an hour or two. My father always believed that it was fine to feed a child with a fever if the child was willing to eat. But don't force food if he doesn't want it. And you don't have to give your child a lot of food. Just a few bites of scrambled egg or a few sips of broth can bring that fever down a bit. It will not make the fever go away but will manage it hopefully within the 102-103 degree range.

If a child's fever is very high—over 103 degrees—then you need to take steps to bring it down. A cool water enema is one good way to do this. Enemas have such a bad rap. Nobody likes them but they are a very effective remedy for many things. You can get an enema bag from any pharmacy for about ten dollars and they're easy to administer. If the fever is getting really high, just get a thick beach towel and put it in the tub. Lay your child on his side without taking clothes off. Slide their pajamas down a little. Place 1/2 to 1 quart warm filtered water in the bag and insert the enema nozzle. Your child will start to feel pressure and will want to go to the bathroom—the water usually doesn't run out. Then gently put him on the toilet and let him go. This will usually bring the fever down by a degree or two.

High fevers—those that range between 104 and 105 degrees—are not dangerous in themselves, but they make the metabolism run very fast and increase the risk of dehydration. Blood sugar often drops, which can lead to convulsions. Your child can sip 50 percent diluted fresh fruit juice to keep tissues hydrated and blood sugar levels in the normal range. If your child will not take anything, you can administer about 4 ounces diluted fruit juice rectally using a bulb syringe. The body will absorb it rectally. It won't run out. This may save your child a trip to the emergency room.

Fever also depletes vitamin A so be sure to give your child drops of cod liver oil under the tongue while the fever is high.

On the other hand, if your child is running a low-grade fever day after day, you can help her generate a fever by giving her a fever bath. Put her in the tub. Fill it with water as hot as she can stand. You can get it hotter for them if you put them in it while you are filling it. You want it pretty hot, but still comfortable. Leave her in the bath for 10-12 minutes, then get her out, dry

her quickly and wrap her up tight. Put her into bed, well covered up. This should help the fever rise to the point where it can be effective and by morning, she may have a normal temperature.

## Tummy trouble

This usually happens when we travel. Slippery elm tincture is my favorite home remedy. We have it in our medicine cabinet and always take it with us. Give a few drops in a little water and the tummy ache is gone in about 10 minutes. This helps for a little bit of gas. You can purchase a glycerin-based, non-alcohol tincture of slippery elm at the health food store. Follow the directions on the bottle for the dose. Also, a wheat bag on the stomach or a warm bath will do wonders for a tummy ache.

## Vomiting

Here's a country doctor tip: once your child starts vomiting, don't give him food, water or liquids for two hours. The stomach wants to rest and if you give food or liquids, it will prolong the vomiting. This can be hard because after vomiting, children are thirsty. Wait as long as you can before giving liquids—two hours is best. If the child is very thirsty, he can suck on an ice cube, but even that may be too much.

I once contracted salmonella and experienced severe vomiting. Even sucking on ice chips made me vomit. I was dangerously dehydrated. In cases like this, administer 50 percent diluted fresh fruit juice rectally with a bulb syringe.

## Diarrhea

Nothing works better than broth for stopping diarrhea—what a wonderful, wonderful food! However, many parents give it in the wrong way—as an 8-ounce serving all at once, and then again several hours later. Instead give broth a few tablespoons at a time and much more

frequently. Broth works because the gelatin in broth binds up the liquid in the colon. It gives bulk and helps to stop the loss of fluids. With really severe diarrhea, you can give an enema to counteract dehydration.

## PINK EYE

Place a drop or two of raw milk or colostrum in each eye—this works wonders. Frequent pink eye may be a sign of vitamin A deficiency, so pay attention to the daily dose of cod liver oil.

## CHICKEN POX

Let the illness run its course; and let any fever do its work. The main thing is to relieve itching, which can be done with baking soda baths. Use a one-pound box per bath.

## BOILS

Boils are another way the body gets rid of toxins. Don't give antibiotics—honor the boil! The best way to treat a boil is to apply a compress of gently warmed cabbage leaves, cooked onion, slices of tomato, plantain leaves, chickweed or crushed garlic. Cover with a piece of plastic wrap and tape the edges with surgical tape. This will keep the poultice wet. Change the poultice several times per day. This can help bring the boil to a head. Then it can be gently pricked with a sterilized needle, drained and allowed to heal.

## SORE THROAT

My father refused to prescribe antibiotics for sore throat but insisted on letting it run its course, even if it was very painful. The best remedy for sore throat is a fever. If fever is not developing, use the method described above. A gargle with hot salt water or hot water with honey and slices of ginger can help, and a hot lemon-honey drink can also be soothing. Broth and cod liver oil are very important in treating sore throats. A prolonged and severe sore throat may be cultured and diagnosed as a strep throat, but these diagnoses mean little as every throat contains the strep organism. Strep can have complications and you may be tempted to give an antibiotic—this is your decision based on how strong you gauge your child to be and how long you have followed the dietary principles.

## WHOOPIING COUGH

This is a terrible illness but a vital strong child can handle it. The harsh cough lasts an average of seven weeks. It is contagious so they can't go out. On [whoopingcough.net](http://whoopingcough.net) you can play a



recording of a cough to know whether this is what your child has. My three children had whooping cough for a month. I never used antibiotics. My children blew out so many toxins that not one had a cold or even a runny nose for over a year. And children who have whooping cough never get asthma. Remedies that work for whooping cough are lacking. Drosera, a homeopathic preparation, is often suggested but my experience is that it is not very effective. Elderberry syrup is another traditional remedy for the cough, but I found it of very little help. Even antibiotics don't do much at all except eliminate the chance of spreading whooping cough. Once the cough starts, it must run its course and nothing much can reduce its severity.

The one thing we found that helped with whooping cough was purchasing a (very expensive) HEPA filter for the kids' rooms. This helped to reduce the frequency of coughing fits, as anything can set off a coughing fit, from eating, to getting a tickle in the throat to simple dust in the air.

Be sure to keep up the cod liver oil during the illness as vitamin A helps lung function.

## HONORING THE ILLNESS

The goal of home remedies is not to stop the symptoms, just reduce their severity. Honor what the body is trying to do and facilitate the conclusion of the process without complications that might land your child in the emergency room. Let the child be sick to its conclusion.

There are many other home remedies, such as echinacea, garlic, oil of oregano, grapefruit seed extract, and what I call the master tonic, a fermented brew of garlic and onion, for infections. These all can be useful but I find even holistically-minded parents use them too quickly. The first sign of a runny nose, out comes the echinacea. My dad taught me that if you always give the body a crutch, it is always going to expect one. If you can avoid giving the body a crutch, don't give it. Let the body do the work itself.

Once when I was 15, I got hives from the top of my head to my feet. My father wouldn't give me anything. I suffered for four days with horrific hives—all he needed to do to relieve the suffering was give me Benadryl. But after that horrible experience, I have never gotten hives again in my life. Coincidence? I don't think so.

Over time, even natural antibiotics can weaken the body's ability to generate an acute illness. An example is a child who gets a 103.7 fever every time she teethes. What an incredible vitality

that allows this child to generate such a nice high fever! You don't want to keep bringing it down to the point where the body gives up and doesn't generate a fever like that anymore, because fever can be so beneficial to health.

## CHRONIC DISEASE

When your body gives up and stops generating acute illness, you have set the stage for chronic illness. Many cancer patients have not had a cold in years. My dad used to see that. He had a patient come in who hadn't been sick in years and tests showed he had cancer everywhere. When your body has become too weak to generate an acute illness, the toxins are going to buildup and result in chronic disease.

Nephritic syndrome in children is a condition where the kidneys leak protein. The only known cure for this serious condition is contracting measles—the measles vaccine does not work. Somehow when the child has nephritic syndrome and contracts measles, the acute symptoms blowout the nephritic syndrome.

Cancer remission is frequently triggered by getting strep. Doctors have known about this for years. In some cases, using strep, they have triggered a 40 percent remission rate.

## THE COMPASSION TO ALLOW SICKNESS

In summary, when your child gets ill, don't panic. Children fed a traditional diet are well able to meet the challenges of an acute illness. Children that are allowed to get sick and then recover under their own power end up infinitely stronger as adults. Can we have the compassion it takes to just let our child be sick? Our tendency is to jump on it, squash it, fix things and get them back to normal right away. Instead, take a step back, take a deep breath and ask what you can do to help your child weather the challenge? Because acute illness can be a real gift.

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### Sidebars

#### WHEN HOME REMEDIES ARE NOT APPROPRIATE

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TRAUMA: If your child has a serious injury, head for the emergency room. Our trauma doctors are wonderful gifts to our society and we need to make use of them when bad things happen.

When your child falls out of a tree and a bone is sticking out through his skin, you don't want to treat that at home.

**EXTREMELY HIGH FEVER:** Most fevers play a beneficial role in your child's health but an extremely high fever (over 104degrees) can be a dangerous situation for a young child and you may need to get emergency care.

**TROUBLE BREATHING:** This is another situation that calls for quick action. If a child is unresponsive, limp in your arms, or has glazed eyes, you need to get help. Dial 911 or hurry him to the emergency room.

## MODERN MEDICINE FROM DAY ONE

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Modern medical intervention begins the moment a child is born—baby's umbilical cord is quickly severed, he is separated from mom, is poked and prodded, gets things squirted in his eyes, fed sugar water and stabbed with vaccination needles. Both parents need to be prepared in advance to prevent these unnecessary and often harmful practices. Here's a checklist to use for guidance:

**BIRTH CENTER:** Most of these modern practices can be avoided if you have your baby at a birth center. You have a lot more control about what goes on there and can usually prevent these interventions unless they are absolutely necessary. If you are going to have your baby at a hospital, you should discuss your wishes with your obstetrician beforehand, backed up with a typed and signed list of your instructions to give to hospital staff.

**UMBILICAL CORD:** The umbilical cord should not be cut until all the cord blood has drained back into the baby. This cord blood serves as an important source of iron during the first six months of life.

**MATERNAL SEPARATION:** Baby should not be separated from mom at birth. If you have had a natural birth, both you and your baby will be on high-adrenaline mode for an hour or so afterwards. This is a very special bonding time that should not be interrupted by poking and prodding.

NO SUGAR WATER! Baby will begin breastfeeding immediately if you put him to your breast—you will be amazed at his rooting and sucking reflexes. Immediate breastfeeding stimulates the production of colostrum, Nature's wonder drug for the immune system. Baby does not need sugar water!

VITAMIN K SHOT: Just say no! The vitamin K injection has been linked to childhood leukemia ([http://www.whale.to/vaccine/vitamin\\_k\\_shot.html](http://www.whale.to/vaccine/vitamin_k_shot.html)). The vitamin K is synthetic and it comes in a liquid that contains benzyl alcohol, carbolic acid, propylene glycol (which is antifreeze), acetic acid, hydrochloric acid, lecithin and castor oil—all these injected into the blood of your newborn. The rationale for the shot is that infants don't have vitamin K—needed for blood clotting—in their bloodstream for the first eight days of life, so if there is bruising during delivery, or if he is in a car accident on the way home from the hospital, he might bleed to death. But if Mom's blood level is very high in vitamin K during pregnancy, some will go through the placenta and into the infant. Goose liver, cheese and egg yolks are excellent sources—and these are foods Mom should be eating anyway. A cup or two of nettle tea each day starting about 36 weeks gestation is another way to build vitamin K stores.

EYE DROPS: Even birth centers have to be dissuaded from putting silver nitrate eye drops into a newborn's eyes. The rationale for this practice is the prevention of blindness due to infection encountered in the birth canal. But we know that a diet containing lots of fermented foods ensures the right flora in the birth canal, flora that actually protects the baby against infection. While the drops may not be particularly harmful, they obscure baby's vision during the critical first hour of bonding. If baby gets a little infection, express a few drops of colostrum into a cup and put one drop in each eye—this will clear it right up.

JAUNDICE: Most babies are jaundiced a few days after birth; if they are boys and breastfed the likelihood of jaundice is high. This happened with my first son when I took him to the pediatrician for his 48-hour check up. He was quite jaundiced and the doctor read me the riot act on all the bad things that can happen with jaundice. He wanted to send me home with special equipment that required blindfolding and putting him under lights for a certain period of time every day, to break down the bilirubin in his blood. I called my country-doctor dad, who was incredulous. He explained that the baby's liver doesn't work well until about day four. Put his crib by the window, he told me, and the baby will be fine in about five days. In the vast majority of cases, jaundice is nothing to worry about but the doctors will try to frighten you

anyway. This was an important new-mom lesson for me—never make a medical decision quickly on the basis of fear.

**VACCINATIONS:** Whether or not you decide to vaccinate your child, vaccinations should not be given before the age of two. To ensure that no vaccinations are given just after birth, present your obstetrician and the hospital with a signed and notarized statement, preferably accompanied by a letter from your lawyer that your child is not to be vaccinated in the hospital. Just to make sure, do not allow your newborn to be separated from you or your partner during your hospital stay.

## DIET BASICS FOR PREVENTING CHILDHOOD ILLNESS

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Children need a diet of basic, wholesome foods. They need these foods three times a day. They need meals prepared by a real person, not a machine in a factory. It doesn't matter whether the meals are plain or fancy. To keep things simple, just remember these basics:

**RAW MILK:** You can make a lot of mistakes and still have healthy children if raw milk is included in their diet. Do not give pasteurized milk to your children—it is associated with frequent ear infections, allergies, digestive problems and lots of other maladies. If you cannot get raw milk, then use raw cheese and bone broths as sources of calcium.

**USE BUTTER LIBERALLY:** Butter is a healthy food. Butter substitutes are poison.

**COD LIVER OIL:** Children should receive a dose of cod liver oil that provides about 5000 IU vitamin A and 500 IU vitamin D daily. Use an eyedropper or mix the cod liver oil with a little water or fresh juice. Cod liver oil can be started as early as three months.

**EGG YOLKS:** Very important for neurological development. Children can have the whites also after the age of one year, but the yolks are the important part. Fix eggs the way your child likes them—the important thing is that they get those yolks. Do not feed raw egg whites.

**LIVER:** Introduce puréed calf, chicken or duck liver early so your child becomes familiar with the taste. If older children refuse liver, chop it up very fine and add it to soups, chili, ground meat dishes, etc. Be sneaky!

FERMENTED FOODS: Yogurt or kefir, sauerkraut and other fermented foods will provide beneficial bacteria, so critical for physical and emotional health.

AVOID: Do your best to avoid junk food, fast food, microwaved food, breakfast cereals, soft drinks, sugar and white flour.

This article appeared in *Wise Traditions in Food, Farming and the Healing Arts*, the quarterly magazine of the Weston A. Price Foundation, *Winter 2007* (<http://www.westonaprice.org/get-involved/journal-winter-2007-childrens-health-ii/>).

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## About Sarah Pope

Sarah Couture Pope is a Phi Beta Kappa, Summa Cum Laude graduate in Economics from Furman University and holds a Master's degree in Governmental Administration from the University of Pennsylvania. She worked for over ten years in the field of Information Technology where she designed and managed the implementation of financial systems for both government and corporate clients. She is currently raising three young children with her husband and has been the WAPF Chapter Leader of Tampa, FL since 2002.

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