How to care for your sick child as we approach winter

As we move into winter, parents and guardians are reminded of some of the best ways to seek help and advice if their children become poorly.

Last winter, due to the various restrictions in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19, there were far fewer common viral infections in younger people which means that there has been more exposure this year. For the majority of children, these illnesses will not be serious and they will soon recover, but it is often difficult to know who to best to contact if carers are concerned about their child being unwell.

Dr Shelley Segal, Clinical Director of Children's Services at Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, said: "With children returning to school and lockdown measures easing, common childhood viral infections have returned, particularly as the weather turns colder.

"There are a number of useful resources available to parents and families, which may be especially helpful.

"If you are worried about your child's health, you can use these resources, visit your local pharmacy, call 111 or contact your GP surgery. 111 online is also available for advice and guidance on where to get help for children over age five.

"Emergency Departments at your local hospitals are for life-threatening emergencies – and should be attended if your child has a genuine emergency. If you're unsure if you need to come to A&E, contact 111 first – they will be able to advise you and, if necessary, discussing an attendance time for you and your child ."

Dr Ed Capo-Bianco, GP and Clinical Lead of the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, said: "There are lots of services available to offer you help and advice should your child become unwell. If you're unsure of where to go or what to do, you can try the NHS 111 website which gives you advice on handling common illnesses and will help you to find the right services to access in Oxfordshire – including pharmacies that are open on bank holidays."

Marie Crofts, Chief Nurse at Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust, said: "The pandemic has been a particular challenging time and supporting children and young people with their mental health is now more important than ever.

"There are lots of things families can do to help children and young people stay well, and help is on hand if they have concerns about their child or young person's mental health.

"Parents can get in touch with our school health nurses and health visitors who, along with our Mental Health in Schools Teams, are here to support children and young people. They can also call NHS 111 to speak to the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Mental Health Helpline anytime day or night.

"Our Minor Injury Units in Abingdon, Henley, and Witney offer urgent care for injuries such as deep cuts, eye injuries, broken bones, severe sprains, minor head injury, minor burns and scalds. Many people go to A&E when they could be treated just as well and probably quicker at an MIU – contact NHS 111 who will be able to advise you and book a slot if necessary."

Useful resources include:

- [Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group leaflet about managing your child's health](#)
- [Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group leaflet on bronchiolitis](#)
- [Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group leaflet on fever](#)
- [0 – 18 NHS website](#)