# **Bummer Summer: Illnesses to watch out for in the season of mangoes, ice creams and school breaks**

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It’s summer time — the season of mangoes, ice creams and, most importantly, summer vacations. Most of us look forward to the summer break so we can whisk our children to cooler climes and exotic locations, and it seems like the best time since flus and other pesky illnesses only accompany the winter months. Or so we think.

With the [**return of the heat**](https://indianexpress.com/article/parenting/health-fitness/how-to-prevent-dehydration-heatstroke-illness-children-summer-5738002/), there is certainly relief that the cold and the slew of illnesses that come with it have been left behind. In doing so, we become complacent and forget that the summer months are its own beast, and come with its fair share of viral infections such as [**gastroenteritis**](https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/health/who-multi-country-outbreak-salmonella-typhimurium-chocolate-infection-stomach-7891048/), conjunctivitis and even [**mosquito-borne illnesses like dengue**](https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/health/mosquito-borne-diseases-causes-symptoms-prevention-6595565/). So ever prevalent are they, that invariably before you depart for your long-awaited vacation, one of the kids begins to feel unwell. It is no cause for worry, you just need to know how to care for a child at the time.

Some of the common illnesses prone to the summer months are as follows:

**Viruses**

* **Common Cold:** Contrary to common misconception, the [**common cold**](https://indianexpress.com/article/parenting/health-fitness/ayurveda-way-treat-common-cold-in-children-5378151/) is not restricted to winter months and can strike any time of year, though they are more common in winter. Most colds don’t need any treatment and settle on their own. You can give a dose or two of **[paracetamol](https://indianexpress.com/article/lifestyle/health/myths-facts-paracetamol-health-fever-pain-side-effects-7852617/)** if your baby is out of sorts
* **Coxsackie Viruses:** These produce hand, foot and mouth disease that is usually seen in the summer months.
* **Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease:**Children who have contracted this usually present with a low-grade fever, followed by a rash involving the hands and feet. Some also develop a rash around the bottom. This is usually followed by ulcers in the mouth, usually on the palate, which can be quite painful. The disease is self-limiting and there is no specific treatment other than treating the pain and making your child comfortable. You must ensure that your child is hydrated at all times, and pain can be treated with paracetamol or ibuprofen.
* **Entero and Adenoviruses:**These are other viruses that cause [**illnesses in summer**](https://indianexpress.com/article/parenting/health-fitness/top-summer-childrens-infections-to-watch-out-for-this-season-7306143/). The symptoms are very varied and range from high fever, vomiting, sore throat, headaches and even conjunctivitis. It very rarely produces a far more serious illness like viral meningitis, involving the brain or even myocarditis, involving the heart. Most of these illnesses need only symptomatic treatment. If you’re worried that symptoms have persisted for a while, then you need to contact your paediatrician. To prevent the spread of the infection hand washing is a must and children who are showing any of these symptoms should stay away from school, summer camps and swimming pools till fully recovered.
* **Gastroenteritis:** Your child can contract Gastroenteritis from many sources, the more common ones being due to exposure to the virus or eating contaminated food. The food may be contaminated with either bacteria, virus or, sometimes, by amoeba. Most children suffering from gastroenteritis either develop vomiting or diarrhoea or both. By and large, children can be managed at home by making sure they are well hydrated, but occasionally, they may need intravenous fluids to prevent [**dehydration**](https://indianexpress.com/article/parenting/health-fitness/health-child-dehydration-some-signs-7537654/). The symptoms may develop a few hours after eating the offensive food or a day or two later. You should contact your paediatrician if your baby is continuously vomiting or has very few wet diapers, has blood in the potty or develops acute pain in the abdomen. Certain bacterial infections where there is bloody diarrhoea can affect the kidney, producing a life threatening illness called Haemolytic Uraemic Syndrome. To reduce the chances of ingesting contaminated food, try the following:

—  wash hands thoroughly

— keep your kitchen counters, knives, chopping boards and utensils clean
— rinse fruits and vegetables well, keep raw meat and poultry away from ready-to-eat food in the fridge

— when travelling, don’t eat fruit and vegetables that cannot be cooked or peeled. Words to live by when travelling with a child are “Boil it, cook it, peel it or forget it”.

* **Sunstrokes:**The summer months and accompanying heat waves lead to a huge risk of [**sunstroke among children**](https://indianexpress.com/article/parenting/health-fitness/how-to-prevent-dehydration-heatstroke-illness-children-summer-5738002/). Sunstrokes lead to overheating of the body because of too much sun exposure. The child will have red hot skin along with nausea, disorientation, a rapid pulse and, sometimes, in severe cases, can lead to unconsciousness and will need a trip to the emergency room. In order to prevent your child from having a sunstroke, keep them hydrated with lots of fluids and also get them to play in the shade, and avoid the sun at its peak.
* **Heat Rash or prickly heat:**All of us have faced this at some point, particularly when we were children. It presents with red or pink rash, mainly seen on the neck and shoulders in general and, often, the head as well. A heat rash is caused when sweat glands get blocked and they swell up leading to itching. Dress your children appropriately in lightweight breathable clothes and the rash usually vanishes in a day or two without any treatment.
* **Swimmer’s Ears:**As the name suggests, it is usually seen in children who have spent a long time in a pool or water body. It is usually an infection that involves the outer ear canal where water remains trapped providing a moist environment for bugs to multiply. It can be quite painful for some children while others may present with excessive itchiness. Please contact your paediatrician if your child is uncomfortable, who will usually prescribe antibiotic ear drops till it heals. Swimmer’s Ears can usually be prevented by making your child wear ear plugs while swimming.
* **Bee Stings**

If your child is playing in parks in the summer months, at some point they may be [**stung by a bee**](https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/pune/forest-department-cautions-tourists-as-bee-sting-cases-rise-784172/) or a wasp. There is no cause for panic. Ice the wound for immediate relief, if you see the stinger you can remove it. If there is significant swelling you ought to give your child an anti-histamine along with a painkiller like paracetamol or ibuprofen. In very rare cases, a bee or wasp sting can produce an anaphylactic reaction and can lead to shortness of breath and wheezing. At this point, you must rush your child to the emergency care, where they will be administered an adrenaline injection.

This list is in no manner exhaustive, but just an indication of the common conditions seen in the summer months. Most of us see summer as a healthy period but each season comes with its own set of ailments. As long as you know what to expect and consult yourpaediatrician when required, your child will be fine and up and about in no time.