

## HOW TO RECOGNISE BABIES' INFECTIONS AND DISEASES

The most frequent baby diseases are thrush, ear infection, spitting up, constipation and diarrhea.

**Thrush** is an infection caused by a fungus called *Candida* which begins as tiny flat white spots in the mouth, that come together and form 'cheesy' white patches<sup>1</sup> on the tongue, the gums<sup>2</sup> or sides and roof<sup>3</sup> of the mouth. If there are very many of these patches, the child may have pain while sucking and will not drink as much as usual. The doctor may prescribe an oral medicine used specifically for fungal infections.

**Ear infection** is caused by fluid collected in the middle ear space that pushes against the eardrum, causing pain. Symptoms of ear infections may include colds, flu, fever, pulling or rubbing the ear, irritability, loss of appetite, loss of hearing or vomiting. Since ear infections can be caused by bacteria, they are generally treated with antibiotics.

**Spitting up** is when some of the baby's stomach contents, usually small amounts of liquid, spill out of the mouth after they have been fed. In most cases, spit up is thought to be due to an immature muscle in the tube connecting the throat and stomach.

There are several things you can do to help babies to keep meals down: position baby upright; avoid vigorous play after feeding; control the amounts you are feeding and the teat hole size.

**Constipation** in infants less than one year of age can be a source of concern<sup>4</sup> for parents. Remember that some grunting and straining<sup>5</sup> is normal. Irregular bowel movements do not necessarily mean a baby is constipated. Treatment for constipation generally includes sieved<sup>6</sup> foods like fruits and vegetables.

Finally, infant **diarrhea** has many different causes. It can be serious if the baby loses a lot of fluid and, consequently, important minerals. Excessive fluid loss caused by diarrhea can lead quickly to a more serious condition called dehydration, especially if the baby is also vomiting.



### GLOSSARY

- 1 parts of an area
- 2 the area of flesh around the roots of the teeth
- 3 the hard upper part of the inside of your mouth
- 4 worry
- 5 trying very hard using all one's strength
- 6 made smooth and homogeneous by passing it through a sieve

### READING COMPREHENSION

● Answer the following questions.

- ① What is thrush?
- ② What are the most common symptoms of thrush?
- ③ What is ear infection caused by?
- ④ Why are ear infections generally treated with antibiotics?
- ⑤ What are the main causes of spit-up?
- ⑥ When is infant diarrhea serious?

### ACTIVITIES



## VOCABULARY

● Match each term with its Italian equivalent.

- |                |                  |
|----------------|------------------|
| ① Thrush       | Ⓐ Gengive        |
| ② Gums         | Ⓑ Disidratazione |
| ③ Middle ear   | Ⓒ Stitichezza    |
| ④ Flu          | Ⓓ Intestino      |
| ⑤ Spit-up      | Ⓔ Mughetto       |
| ⑥ Throat       | Ⓕ Orecchio medio |
| ⑦ Constipation | Ⓖ Influenza      |
| ⑧ Bowel        | Ⓗ Rigurgito      |
| ⑨ Dehydration  | Ⓘ Gola           |

## ACTIVITIES



## WRITING

● Write sentences which have the same meaning as the following.

- ① The doctor may prescribe an oral medicine used specifically for fungal infections.  
.....
- ② Since ear infections can be caused by bacteria, they are generally treated with antibiotics.  
.....
- ③ Spitting up is when some of the baby's stomach contents, usually small amounts of liquid, spill out of the mouth after they have been fed.  
.....
- ④ Treatment for constipation generally includes strained foods like fruits and vegetables.  
.....

## FILL IN THE TABLE

● Place the following symptoms or consequences under the disease they refer to.

- |                       |                            |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| ① Fever               | ⑦ White patches            |
| ② Spill out of liquid | ⑧ Irritability             |
| ③ Vomiting            | ⑨ Irregular bowel movement |
| ④ Loss of appetite    | ⑩ Less drinking            |
| ⑤ Dehydration         | ⑪ Loss of fluid            |
| ⑥ Pain while sucking  |                            |

THRUSH	EAR INFECTION	SPITTING UP	CONSTIPATION	DIARRHEA

## ROLE PLAY

● Work in pairs. A mother is worried about her baby's infection symptoms. The doctor answers her questions providing explanations and diagnosis.