

Will the doctor see your child now?

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A national poll finds that parents are more confident they could get same-day phone advice than an office visit for sick kids. Credit: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital

Parents often want medical advice when their child gets sick but only about half are very confident they can get a same day appointment with their child's provider, a new national poll finds.

Forty-two percent of parents say they would take their [child](#) to an urgent care, retail clinic or emergency department if their child woke up with a sore throat and fever, according to the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health.

But the poll also found that many parents would try to communicate with their child's provider without an office visit, with 42 percent saying they would call for [advice](#). More parents were confident they could get same-day phone advice (60 percent) than get in to see the doctor (53 percent).

Just 10 percent of parents would use email to discuss a sick child's health issues with their child's provider.

"Most parents want timely [medical advice](#) when their child is sick, and it can be frustrating when they don't feel like they have immediate access to a [health care provider](#)," says Mott poll co-director and pediatrician Gary Freed, M.D.

"More parents seem to be utilizing alternatives to a traditional office visit, such as having a consult by phone. Our poll found that four in 10 parents would turn to a walk-in option like urgent care if their child woke up in the morning with a [sore throat](#) and fever. While these services may seem convenient, parents should recognize that these providers may not be familiar with their child's medical history and insurance coverage may be limited."

Freed notes that many offices have a limited number of "sick visits" available each day and these may fill up quickly, especially in winter months or during an outbreak of an illness like the flu. However, phone or email advice may also be an option for minor illnesses and parents are encouraged to consider those routes before seeking emergency care.

"When parents are picking a doctor for their child, they should discuss these types of situations ahead of time so they know what type of arrangements are made for urgent visits or advice," Freed says.

"Every provider has a different system in place to address parent concerns when their child is ill, and parents should look for one that best matches their expectations. More often than not, a primary care office is still the most convenient, cost efficient place to get the care and health advice your child needs."

The poll is based on responses from a national sample of 2,036 [parents](#) of children 0-18 years of age who were asked about their experiences trying to get [health](#) care advice or a provider visit for a sick child.

Read the full Mott [poll](#) report here: <http://mottnpch.org/reports-surveys/sick-kids-can->

[parents-get-same-day-doctor-appointments](#)

Provided by University of Michigan

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