

Fever

What Is Fever?

It is normal for the body's temperature to change during the day. Exercise, warm clothing and hot weather can cause a mild rise in temperature. A fever is a body temperature of over 100.4 degrees F (or 38.0 degrees C). Most of the time fever is not harmful. Fever is the body's natural way of fighting an illness.

Treatment of a Fever

You do not always need to treat a fever. The most important thing to do is to watch how your child acts. Is he eating and sleeping well? How does he look? Does he play at times? If he is uncomfortable, you can try these tips.

Do's

- Offer extra fluids to drink all through the day. This restores lost body fluids.
- Dress your child comfortably. Avoid over dressing or bundling. This can raise body temperature.
- If your child is uncomfortable, you can give him acetaminophen (like Tylenol®) or ibuprofen. Make sure to give the correct dose based on your child's weight. Give ibuprofen with food or drink to avoid stomach upset.
- Make sure your child gets enough rest.

Don'ts

- Don't sponge with alcohol or give cold baths to lower a fever.
- Don't give fever medicine to an infant under 3 months old, unless told to by a doctor.

- Don't worry if your child is not eating solid food. Liquids are more important during a fever.
- Don't ever give aspirin to your child.
- Don't wake up your child to give him fever medicine.
- Don't use ibuprofen for infants less than 6 months unless told to by a doctor.

Call the Doctor if Your Child:

- ❑ Is less than 3 months and has a fever (call immediately).
- ❑ Has a fever for more than three days.
- ❑ Is getting sicker.
- ❑ Is in pain or complains of pain, especially in the neck, ears or throat.
- ❑ Is very irritable or sleepy.
- ❑ Has trouble breathing.
- ❑ Has a seizure.
- ❑ Has a rash (except Chicken Pox).
- ❑ Has a dry tongue and lining of the mouth.
- ❑ Vomits frequently or for more than a day.
- ❑ Hallucinates or becomes confused.
- ❑ Is less than 1 year old and has less than three wet diapers in a day.
- ❑ Is over 1 year old and does not urinate at least twice in a day.



Continued on back

Fever

Thermometers

The American Academy of Pediatrics advises that parents stop using thermometers that contain mercury. This is because of possible exposure to mercury if the thermometer breaks. If this occurs, call your local Poison Center. They will tell you how to safely dispose of the mercury.

Digital thermometers do not contain mercury. They can be used in the mouth, in the bottom (rectally), or in the armpit (axillary).

Taking your child's temperature in the bottom (rectum) gives the most accurate reading. This is the preferred method for infants under 6 months if you cannot get a good reading with the armpit method.

Taking your child's temperature in the armpit is the best choice for most illnesses. It is easy, accurate and less bother to the child.

Ear (tympanic) thermometers measure the temperature in the eardrum. Home tympanic thermometers, forehead strip thermometers and pacifier thermometers are not very reliable, so avoid using them.

Taking Your Child's Temperature

First, clean the thermometer with warm soapy water or wipe with rubbing alcohol. Rinse with cool water. Always stay with your child while taking a temperature.

Rectal Temperature (for infants under 6 months)

1. Dab some non-petroleum-based lubricant (like KY Jelly) on the tip of the thermometer.

2. Place your infant lying face down or on his side with his knees drawn up.
3. Gently insert the thermometer into the anal opening (rectum), about 1/4 to 1/2 inch (until silver tip disappears).
4. Keep one hand firmly on your child.
5. Read the temperature when you hear the digital thermometer signal (two minutes for glass thermometer).

Armpit Temperature (for children and infants, including newborns)

1. Place the tip of the thermometer in the armpit next to the skin.
2. Hold your child's arm tightly against his chest.
3. Read the temperature when you hear the digital thermometer signal (four-five minutes for glass thermometer).

Oral Temperature (For children over 5 years)

1. Wait 30 minutes after your child eats or drinks.
2. Gently put the tip of the thermometer under one side of the tongue, toward the back.
3. Read the temperature when you hear the digital thermometer signal (three minutes for glass thermometer).

For More Information

- Your health care provider
- Children's Resource Line:
(206) 987-2500 or 1-866-987-2500
toll-free Washington, Alaska, Montana, Idaho
- www.seattlechildrens.org

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Children's Hospital. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's health care provider.

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