

# Fever



## What is a fever?

A fever is a rise in body temperature that is above normal. Fevers are common in young children and are most often a sign that the body is fighting an infection. Usually a fever is not harmful, and it may help your child fight an illness.

## How do I know if my child has a fever?

If your child's forehead, chest or face feels warm you can take your child's temperature using a thermometer. Normal body temperature is about 98.6° F. A temperature higher than 100° F (38° C), taken under the arm, is usually considered a fever.



## How do I take my child's temperature?

Electric, digital thermometers are most often used because they are accurate, low-cost, and easy to use.

Temperatures can be taken:

- *In the armpit* (under the arm)—recommended for infants and toddlers.
- *By mouth* (under the tongue)—okay for children older than 4 years.
- *Rectally* (in the bottom) recommended for infants under 3 months.

Temperature strips and pacifier thermometers are not recommended because they are less accurate. Mercury glass thermometers should not be used because they are breakable and the mercury is toxic.

## How do I manage my child's fever?

*Without medication:*

A child with a fever, who is active and playful, usually does not require medication. Instead, focus on keeping your child comfortable:

- Dress your child in light weight clothing; do not overdress.
- Keep the room at a temperature that is not too hot or cold.
- Give extra fluids to prevent dehydration.

*With medication:*

Fever reducing medication is sometimes given to help a child feel more comfortable, and/or when a fever is very high. Check with your child's health care provider before giving medications such as Acetaminophen (Tylenol®/Tempra®) or Ibuprofen (Motrin®/Advil®)\*. Always give medication according to instructions and use the measuring device that comes with the medication. *Don't give your child aspirin because of its association with Reye's syndrome.* Keep all medications out of children's reach.

## When should I call a health care provider?

High or rapidly rising fevers can be a sign of a serious infection. Depending on your child's age, behavior, and other symptoms, you may need to seek medical help. Call your child's doctor if:

- Your child under 3 months has any fever, call your baby's health care provider immediately.
- Your child between 3 and 6 months has a fever above 101° F.
- Your child over 6 months has a fever above 103° F.
- Your child's fever lasts more than a few days.
- Your child has a fever and is not eating or playing or is having difficulty breathing.
- Your child has a stiff neck or rash.
- Your child has other signs of illness such as persistent diarrhea or vomiting, a cough or a severe sore throat.
- Your child has a seizure.
- Your child seems very sick or you have a question about your child's fever and are not sure what to do.

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