

## Fever

### What is a fever?

A fever is when your child's body temperature is higher than 100.4°F (38° C). Normal body temperature can be anywhere between 97° F to 100°F. (36° to 37.7° C.)

### What causes a fever?

Fevers are the body's natural response to an infection, like a cold or the flu. A high fever does not necessarily mean your child has a more serious infection.

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

Take your child's temperature using a **digital thermometer**. Always follow the manufacturer instructions. Temperatures can be taken:

- Under the tongue (oral)
- In the bottom (rectal)
- In the armpit
- In the ear
- Across the forehead (temporal or no-contact)

**Do not use fever strips; they are not accurate.**

A **rectal thermometer** is the most accurate way to measure temperature, especially in babies. It is usually 1 degree higher than an oral or armpit temperature. To take a rectal temperature:

- Read the thermometer instructions to make sure it can be used in the rectum.
- Insert the thermometer tip no more than ½ inch into the rectum (or as a doctor instructs).

**Note:** If your child is younger than 3 months old and you think they have a fever, call your child's health provider first.



Taking a temperature with a no-contact thermometer.



Taking a temperature with the thermometer in the armpit.



Taking a temperature with the thermometer in the ear.

### How can I lower my child's fever?

If your child's temperature is above 100.4°F (38° C), you can help reduce their fever by:

- Dressing them in thin pajamas, shorts, underwear, or diapers
- Leaving them uncovered or covering them with only a thin sheet
- Using a small fan to make sure the air in your child's room is moving. (Avoid aiming the fan directly at your child.)
- Encouraging your child to drink liquids.

**Don't put your child in a cold bath.** This can cause chills (shivering,) which may cause their temperature to rise.

## What medicine can I use to bring my child's fever down?

A child with a fever may feel achy, irritable, and miserable. If your child is uncomfortable and has a fever higher than 101°F (38.3°C), you can give them:

- **Acetaminophen** (Tylenol) every 4 hours as needed but no more than 5 times in 24 hours
- **Ibuprofen** (Advil, others) every 6 to 8 hours as needed (for children 6 months old and older) with food

Read the directions on the bottle carefully to make sure you are giving your child the right amount of medicine.

**Never give your child aspirin.** It has been linked to Reye's syndrome, a rare illness that can cause brain and liver damage.

**Remember:** A low-grade fever (under 101°F or 38.3°C) is not harmful. Fever helps the body fight infection.

## What if my child has a seizure during their fever?

A rapid change in body temperature, like a sudden fever, can cause **febrile seizures** (convulsions). During a seizure, your child may appear unconscious, and their arms and legs may jerk. This may last anywhere from a few seconds to several minutes. They may also be sleepy after the seizure.

### If your child has a seizure:

- Put your child on their side with their head turned to one side.
- Remove anything in their mouth, like a pacifier or bottle.
- Don't put your fingers or anything else inside their mouth.
- Remove any objects around them so they don't hurt themselves.

Call your child's healthcare provider immediately after the seizure. If the seizure has not stopped after 5 minutes, call 911.

## When should I call my child's healthcare provider?

Call your child's healthcare provider if:

- Your newborn baby (younger 90 days old) develops a fever.
- Your child has a fever above 104°F.
- Your child's fever does not go down after you give them acetaminophen or ibuprofen.
- Your child vomits often or with unusual force.
- Your child has a seizure.
- Your child has a stiff neck or won't move their neck.
- Your child looks ill, cries constantly, or seems to be in pain, whether they have a fever or not.
- Your child has trouble drinking fluids or has fewer wet diapers.
- Your child has a low-grade fever (under 101°F or 38.3°C) for more than 48 hours, even if they seem well.

Call 911 or take your child to the emergency room if:

- They are having trouble breathing
- They are unresponsive or too sleepy

Notes

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