

Fever in Children



What is a fever?

A fever is normal response to an infection. Fevers help fight infection. Fever can make your child feel bad. Fever is when the body's temperature is higher than normal. A fever is a temperature of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher.

How do I measure my child's temperature

The best way to take a temperature is in the mouth (orally). Measuring a temperature under the armpit (axillary), in the ear, or on the forehead is not as accurate. It is NOT accurate to measure a child's temperature by feeling their skin.

- When checking an oral temperature, do not measure the temperature in a child's mouth within 30 minutes of a hot/cold food or drink. This will change the reading. Place the tip of the thermometer under the child's tongue towards the back. Close lips around the thermometer until you get a result. Clean thermometer after use.



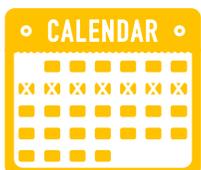
Should I treat my child's fever?

Treating a fever may be good if your child is uncomfortable, but you do not have to. How high the temperature is should not be the only reason you give medicine to your child or call a doctor. You should watch how your child acts. In most cases, a child with a fever can stay at home. It is important to know when a child needs to be checked by a healthcare professional.



When you should bring your child to a doctor?

- Infants less than three months of age with an oral temperature of 100.4°F (38°C) or greater **NEED TO BE CHECKED** no matter how the infant appears (even if the baby looks normal or seems fine).
- Children who are three months to three years who have an oral temperature of 100.4°F (38°C) or greater for more than three days. Go right away if your child seems sick (example: being sleepier than normal, not drinking fluids, decreased wet diapers). Children who are three months to three years who have an oral temperature of 102°F (38.9°C) or greater.
- Children of any age whose oral, ear, or forehead reading is 104°F (40°C) or greater or whose armpit reading is 103°F (39.4°C) or greater.
- Children of any age who have a seizure from a fever called a febrile seizure. Febrile seizures look like uncontrolled shaking that can happen when a child has a temperature greater than 100.4°F (38°C).
- Children of any age who have fevers for more than seven days.
- Children of any age who have a fever and a chronic medical condition such as heart disease, cancer, lupus, or sickle cell anemia.
- **Parents who do not know what to do should call the child's doctor.**





Fever treatment options

- The best way to treat fever is to use medicine such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin). These medicines can reduce the child's symptoms and lower the temperature by 2-3°F. Aspirin is BAD for children under 18 years old due to a dangerous condition (Reyes syndrome).
 - **Acetaminophen** may be given every four to six hours as needed. Acetaminophen can only be given five times in a 24-hour period. Acetaminophen should not be used in children younger than three months of age without checking with a healthcare provider. The dose of acetaminophen is made by weight, not age.
 - **Ibuprofen** may be given every six hours. Ibuprofen SHOULD NOT be given to children younger than six months of age. The dose of ibuprofen is made by weight, not age.
 - **Fever reducing medicine should only be given as needed and stopped once uncomfortable symptoms have gotten better.**
- Having a fever can lead to dehydration or not enough fluid in the body. Parents should help their child drink fluids a lot. Children with fevers may not feel hungry and that is okay. It is not necessary to make your child eat. Fluids such as milk (breast or cow's milk for >12 months), formula, and water should be given a lot. Keep count of wet diapers to make sure it is close to the child's normal amount.
- Encourage your child to rest as much as they want. Children may return to school or other activities when the temperature has been normal without medicine for 24 hours.



Other considerations

Teething does not cause a fever. Bundling up an infant (less than three months old) in too many clothes or blankets can increase the temperature a little bit. An oral temperature of 101°F (38.5°C) or greater is probably not from bundling. The infant with a temperature of 101°F (38.5°C) should be checked by a healthcare provider.

Some vaccines can cause fever. Consider timing of fever to when vaccine was received. Some parents given their children sponge baths to cool them down, but you do not have to. Some people think they can cool down a child by putting rubbing alcohol on their skin or in the bath. Do not use any kind of alcohol to treat a fever as this is dangerous.



**WHEN IN DOUBT, PLEASE CONTACT
YOUR CHILD'S HEALTHCARE PROVIDER**

This information is general educational information only. It is not intended as medical advice for individual conditions or treatments. Talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist before following any medical regimen to see if it is safe and effective for you.