

Fever In Children

A Guide for Parents



This leaflet provides information about fever in children, its causes, signs and symptoms, and management to reduce it. It is designed to respond to questions parents most frequently ask.



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What is Fever?

A fever is higher than normal body temperature. In general any thermometer reading above 100.4 °F or 38 °C is considered a sign of fever in children. This number may vary according to the method used for taking temperature. Always let your Paediatrician know which method you have used.

What Causes Fever?

Most fevers are caused by viral infection, e.g. cold and flu. These illnesses are generally not serious and usually subside in a few days.

Antibiotics are usually not required.

Sometimes fevers are caused by more serious infections which require special attention and treatment.

How Can I Check My Child'S Temperature:

Different kinds of thermometers are available in the market. Digital thermometers are safer than mercury thermometer.

Fever can be checked at different sites, oral (mouth), axilla (underarm), rectal and tympanic (ear).

Place the thermometer at the site for 2 minutes for regular mercury thermometer or wait until it beeps for digital thermometer.

From birth to 5yrs rectal or underarm temperature can be taken. For children older than 5yrs old , if the child is willing to keep the thermometer under the tongue for the required time oral temperature can be taken easily.

Ear thermometers can be used in children greater than 1 yr old but can be unreliable if not used properly.

Should I Treat Fever?

Fever is the body's natural way of fighting infection and is generally harmless. .If your child is uncomfortable you may give medications to bring his/her fever down. In some children fever can be associated with seizures (fits) If your child had a seizure in the past , take precautionary steps to control fever.





How Can I Treat Fever?

- Give Calpol, or Panadol as per instructions. This medication will help bring the fever down. It can be given every four-six hours as required.
- Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids.
- Allow your child to wear light clothing. Do not bundle your child in heavy clothes or blankets.
- Maintain a normal room temperature.
- If your child is vomiting and unable to take medication by mouth your Paediatrician may recommend a rectal suppository.
- If fever is more than 103 degrees you can start sponging or give bath with lukewarm water. Do not use cold water to sponge or bath, as this will cause shivering and could increase the temperature. Always use sponging in conjunction with fever medicine.

When should I call a doctor or go to the Emergency Department?

- If your child is under six months of age.
- If your child looks very ill, is lethargic or drowsy.
- If fever persists for more than 24hrs.
- If your child has persistent vomiting and diarrhoea or is having difficulty breathing.
- If your child has a convulsion or seizure.
- If fever is associated with headache, skin rash, severe sore throat, severe ear pain.
- If fever is associated with urinary problems (burning, increased frequency or urgency).

- If the child's oral intake is decreased significantly.
- If your child has a condition that suppresses immune response such as cancer.

While you can often tell by touching if your child it is always advisable to check with a thermometer if fever is present and how high it is, specially before you give any fever reducing medicine.

For more details, please contact:

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