



# Fever:

## What To Do When Your Child Has A High Temperature



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# Fevers Are Common

Fevers are common among children. Fevers are usually caused by viruses, such as the cold or flu, or bacteria, such as strep throat or some ear infections. Fevers between 100.4°F and 104°F (38 to 40°C) are usually not harmful and may last 3 to 5 days. However, high fevers can be dangerous and need immediate medical attention.

## When Should I Seek Medical Attention?

If your child has a fever, it is important to know when your child should see a doctor. Here are some guidelines:

### **Infants up to 3 months old:**

Call your doctor or go to the emergency room if your child has a rectal temperature of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher. A slight fever can be a sign of a serious infection in young infants.

### **Infants 3 months old to 6 months old:**

Call your doctor if your child has a temperature of 101°F (38.3°C) or higher.

### **Children 6 months old or over:**

Watch your child closely if he or she has a temperature of 102°F (38.8°C) to 102.9°F (39.4°C). Call your doctor if your child's temperature rises or lasts for more than 2 days.

Seek emergency care if your child has constant vomiting or diarrhea, earache, seizures, headache, skin rash, sore throat, stomach pain, difficulty breathing, unconsciousness, abdominal pain, or seizure.

### **A fever is probably not serious if your child:**

- Still wants to play
- Eats and drinks well
- Is alert and smiling
- Has a normal skin color
- Looks well when his or her temperature comes down



# Measure Your Child's Temperature

Use a digital thermometer to measure your child's temperature. It is easy and safe to use, and it only takes a few seconds to get a temperature reading.

**There are a few ways to use a digital thermometer:**

Method	Accuracy	Instructions for use
<b>Rectal Temperature</b>	Most accurate  Recommended for children under 5 years old	Have your child lie down on his or her stomach on your lap.  Apply a small amount of lubricant (such as petroleum jelly) to the tip of the thermometer.  Gently insert the thermometer about ½ an inch to 1 inch (1.25cm to 2.5cm) into the rectum.
<b>Oral Temperature</b>	Very accurate  Recommended for children 4 years old and over	Place the thermometer under the tongue and toward the back.  Have your child hold the thermometer in place with his or her lips and fingers.  Make sure your child breathes through the nose and keeps his or her mouth closed.
<b>Ear Temperature</b>	Often inaccurate  Not recommended for infants 3 months old or younger	Pull the child's outer ear back before inserting the ear thermometer.  Hold the thermometer to the ear for 2 seconds or until it beeps.
<b>Underarm Temperature</b>	Least accurate  May be appropriate if the rectal or oral temperature cannot be taken	Place the tip of the thermometer in a dry underarm.  Close the underarm by holding the elbow against the chest.  If you are uncertain about the result, compare it with another reading.

**Your child has a fever if his or her temperature is above:**

- 100.4°F (38°C) measured in the rectum or ear
- 99.5°F (37.5°C) measured in the mouth
- 99°F (37.2°C) measured under the arm

# Treat Your Child's Fever

**1) Medicine:** The most effective way to treat a fever is to use acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin). They can reduce your child's fever and discomfort. Many children sweat after taking medicine, but this is a sign that the fever is going down. Tips on giving medicine:

- Always ask your doctor before giving any medicine to your child. Never give aspirin or adult medicine to a child under 18 years old.
- Always read the package label and give the correct dose based on your child's weight.
- Always measure medicine with a dropper, dosage cup, or an accurate measuring device.

**2) Less clothing:** It is normal for children to feel cold or have chills when they have a fever. However, overdressing can raise your child's temperature. If your child has chills, give him or her a light blanket.

**3) More fluids:** Fluids prevent dehydration and help the body cool itself. Give your child plenty of water, milk, formula, or clear soup. You can also offer your child frozen popsicles or flavored gelatin if your child does not have diarrhea.

If your child has diarrhea or is vomiting, use Pedialyte or oral rehydration solution, which contain water and salts to replenish fluids and salts. Oral rehydration products are available in most pharmacies.

**4) Rest:** Fevers make most children tired and achy. Make sure your child gets plenty of rest.

**5) Sponge baths:** Sponge baths are usually given if a child has high fever. Place your child in a bathtub and use a damp washcloth to apply lukewarm water to the entire body. Never sponge with alcohol. It can be absorbed through your child's skin or inhaled.





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