

Temperature & Fever in Children

Fever is a raised body temperature above the normal daily variation, which usually suggests an underlying infection. **A normal temperature in babies and children** is about 36.4°C, but this can vary slightly from child to child; a **fever is a high** temperature of 38°C or more.

Fever is common and mild feverish illness is a normal part of childhood; a natural, healthy and harmless response to help the body fight infection. Common causes of fever include the common cold, ear infections, stomach bugs (gastroenteritis), throat and travel-related infections.

Children under six months any child under 6 months of age with a fever should be assessed by a health professional.

Managing a fever and how to treat at home

You can usually look after your child or baby at home and in most cases the temperature should go down over 3 or 4 days. See below advice on how to manage your child's fever at home.

Do

- Give them plenty of fluids
- Look out for signs of dehydration
- Give them food if they want it
- Check on your child regularly during the night
- Keep them at home - It is best to keep feverish children away from nursery or school while the fever persists.
- Give them paracetamol or ibuprofen if they're distressed or unwell. If they are not settling you can alternate between paracetamol and ibuprofen.
- Avoid over or under dressing your feverish child

Don't

- Sponge them down to cool them – fever is a natural and healthy response to infection
- Cover them up in too many clothes or bedclothes
- Give aspirin to under 16s
- Give ibuprofen and paracetamol doses at the same time.
- Give paracetamol to a child under 2 months unless your GP tells you to
- Give ibuprofen to a child under 3 months or under 5kg unless your GP tells you to
- Give ibuprofen to children with asthma unless it is known to be safe
- Give ibuprofen if signs of dehydration*
- Give ibuprofen to children with chickenpox

Medication

- You can give either paracetamol or ibuprofen if your child is unwell or appears distressed. Neither should be given routinely just to reduce body temperature if the child is unwell or with the aim of preventing fits.
- Do not give your child paracetamol and ibuprofen at the same time unless advised to do so by a health professional. If your child is still distressed before the next dose of one of these medicines is due, you can consider using the other.
- **Speak to your pharmacist** - for advice if you're not sure which type of medicine is best for your child's and your symptoms.

When should I seek advice?

Rarely, more serious medical problems may cause fever in children. Contact NHS 111 or your GP if your child's health gets worse or if you have concerns about looking after your child at home. Also seek medical advice straight away if you notice any of the following:

- Is under 3 months old and has a temperature of 38°C or higher, or you think they have a high fever
- Is 3 to 6 months old and has a temperature of 39°C or higher, or you think they have a high fever
- Has other signs of illness, such as a rash, as well as a high temperature
- Has a high temperature that's lasted for more than 5 days
- Is not eating or drinking, or is unwell and you're worried

- Has a high temperature that doesn't come down with paracetamol or ibuprofen
- Is showing signs of dehydration – such as nappies that aren't very wet, sunken eyes, and no tears when they're crying.*

More information is available at the following website

- NHS website - www.nhs.uk (Fever in children)
- Or visit your local pharmacy for advice

The 'Be self-care aware' campaign was created by NHS Derby and Derbyshire Clinical Commissioning Group and is reproduced here with their kind permission.