



CONTACT NEMS

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WHAT IS A FEVER?

A fever is a body temperature higher than normal. It is part of the body's defense against infection. In children, it is defined as a measured temperature of 100.4°F and higher.

WHAT CAUSES FEVER?

Fever is a symptom, not an illness. Children commonly get fevers from infections. Fever activates the body's immune system and fights infection. The fever itself is usually not dangerous, and does not cause permanent harm to the brain or other organs.

HOW LONG CAN A FEVER LAST?

Most fevers range from 101°F to 104°F (38.3°C to 40°C) and last for 2 to 3 days. In general, a fever is not a good indication of how serious the illness is. It is important to determine how sick your child is by how he or she acts, not just by the fever itself.

HOW DO I MEASURE A TEMPERATURE?

There are many ways to check for fever. Digital thermometers are much safer than glass/mercury thermometers.

ARMPIT

- Quick and easy. Safer for a baby less than 3 months old.
 1. Put the tip of the thermometer in a dry armpit.
 2. Close the armpit by holding the elbow against the chest.

RECTUM

- For children less than 4 or 5 years old.
 1. Have your child lie stomach down on your lap.
 2. Put some water-based lubricating jelly on the end of the thermometer and on the rectum (the opening of the anus.)
 3. Gently put the thermometer gently into the rectum about 1 inch. (If the child is less than 6 months old, put it in only about 1/4 to 1/2 inch.)
 4. Hold your child still.

EAR

- For children greater than 6 months old.
- If your child has been outdoors on a cold day, he or she needs to be inside for 15 minutes before taking the temperature.
 1. Pull the ear backward to straighten the ear canal.
 2. Place the end of the thermometer into your child's ear canal. It only takes about 2 seconds to take the temperature.

MOUTH

- For children older than 4 or 5 years old, take the temperature by mouth.
- Be sure your child has not had a cold or hot drink in the last 30 minutes.
 1. Put the tip of the thermometer under one side of the tongue and toward the back.
 2. Have your child hold the thermometer in place with his lips and fingers (not teeth).

Please note that this information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to replace the advice of a health care professional. North East Medical Services disclaims any liability for the decisions you make based on this information.



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HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD WITH A FEVER?

Keeping your child comfortable should be a top priority. Try these steps to reduce a fever:

- Administer an anti-fever medication.
 - Acetaminophen (brand name: Tylenol) is a good choice.
 - Ibuprofen is another choice for kids older than 6 months of age.
 - **DO NOT give aspirin**, as it causes severe and dangerous side effects in children.
- Dress your child lightly. Extra clothing or blankets will trap body heat and cause the temperature to rise.
- Place cold washcloths over your child's forehead.
- Give your child a lukewarm bath.
- Encourage your child to drink plenty of fluids. Try popsicles or ice chips.
- Do not use alcohol baths.
- When your child is well, see the doctor regularly to update their vaccines.

WHAT ABOUT FEBRILE SEIZURES?

Fevers do not always trigger a seizure. Less than 5% of children will develop a brief seizure from fever. This happens most commonly to toddlers. The seizure is usually not harmful, but you should still have your child see a doctor if this happens.

WHEN DO I CALL THE DOCTOR?

Call your doctor **IMMEDIATELY** if:

- Your child is less than 3 months old with a temperature over 100.4°F or 38°C.
- Your child has a fever and looks or acts very sick:
 - Fussy or difficult to wake up
 - Headache or stiff neck
 - Trouble breathing
 - Unable to swallow
 - Refusing to drink
 - Rash
 - Seizure

Call your doctor within 24 hours if:

- Your child is 3 and 6 months old with a temperature over 100.4°F or 38°C.
- Your child is older than 6 months with a temperature over 104°F or 40°C
- Fever has lasted more than 3 days
- Not as active or playful as usual
- Not drinking fluids well
- You have other concerns or questions

Sources:

- Children's Hospital Boston
- MedlinePlus

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