

Fever in Your Child: What to Do

Pediatrics • Immunizations & Preventive Care

A fever is a body temperature of 100.4 F (38 C) or higher. It is the body's way of fighting germs. Your goal is to keep your child comfortable and to know when to get help.

Take your child's temperature

- Use a digital thermometer, never a glass one.
- Under 3 months: take it in the bottom (rectal), as your provider advises.
- Older children: use the forehead (3 months and older), ear (6 months and older), or mouth (about 4 years and older).

Babies under 3 months

- **Any fever of 100.4 F (38 C) or higher: call your provider or go to the emergency room right away.**
- Do not give fever medicine first unless your provider tells you to.

Keep your child comfortable

- Give plenty of fluids, such as breast milk, formula, or water.
- Dress your child in light clothes.
- Do not use cold baths, ice, or rubbing alcohol.

Give fever medicine safely

- Give acetaminophen (Tylenol) by your child's weight. Use the syringe or cup that comes with it, never a kitchen spoon.

- Give ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) only if your child is 6 months or older.
- **Never give aspirin.** It causes Reye syndrome, a serious brain and liver illness.
- Do not switch between medicines unless told to.
- Your child's weight and dose: _____.

Call your provider today if you have

- A child with a fever for more than 3 days
- A child under 2 with a fever for more than 24 hours
- A child with ear pain or pain when passing urine
- A child with no urine in 8 hours or a dry mouth

Call 911 or your local emergency number if you have

- A child with trouble breathing or blue lips
- A child who is very hard to wake up
- A child with a stiff neck or a seizure
- A child with a purple rash that does not fade when pressed

This handout supports, not replaces, advice from your own nurse or doctor.

Online: nclexpace.com/patient-education/fever-in-children/patient

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