

NOTE: Contact your child's doctor anytime your child has a fever and also:

- Has a chronic health problem.
- Sees a doctor or specialist or needs medicines regularly.
- Is being treated for cancer or another serious health problem.
- Has a problem with his immune system.
- Has had a urinary tract infection (UTI) in the past.

Fever quick tips

Fever is a common sign of illness in children.

- It is a normal response to an infection caused by bacteria (germ) or a virus. Fever most often goes away when your child's illness goes away.
- It can be controlled with medicines like acetaminophen or ibuprofen. These medicines do not "cure" the fever or the illness. They only make your child more comfortable.
- Never give your child aspirin or aspirin products, such as baby aspirin, Pepto-Bismol, Goody's, BC powder or Alka Seltzer. Doing so may cause Reye's syndrome, a serious disease.

What kind of symptoms does fever cause?

Your child may have one or more of these:

- Temperature of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
- Flushed skin
- Increased heart rate
- Increased breathing rate, but is breathing easily and not having trouble breathing

Should I treat my child's fever?

Some guidelines are listed below for when you may need to call your child's doctor or treat your child's fever.

Call your child's doctor if your child has not yet been checked by a doctor for fever and:

- Is younger than 3 months of age and has a fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher rectally. Even a slight fever in a young baby can be a sign of serious illness.
- Is 3 to 24 months of age and has a fever of 102.5°F (39.2°C) or higher rectally.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Fever, continued

Rectally means that you take the temperature in the rectum (your child's bottom where stool comes out).

- Insert the thermometer into your child's rectum until you cannot see the silver tip.
- Other methods are not as accurate in babies.
- An accurate temperature in young babies is very important, especially when a doctor has not seen the baby yet.

For children older than 24 months of age with fever:

- You do not need to give your child medicine for fever unless they are uncomfortable.
- Check your child's activity level to find out if you need to do anything for fever. The illness is probably **not** serious if your child:
 - Is playing as usual.
 - Is drinking as usual.
 - Seems happy and alert.
 - Is breathing easily and has a normal skin color.
 - Looks well when his temperature comes down.

Your child may not feel like eating a lot when they have a fever. This is OK. Be sure they are drinking and urinating (going to the bathroom) as usual. If they are not, call the doctor.

How do I treat a fever?

Some guidelines for treating fever include:

- Dress your child very lightly. Do not bundle them or cover them with a blanket.
- For children older than 12 months of age, give extra water or cool liquids.
- For babies younger than 12 months of age, avoid giving extra water. Instead, use oral rehydration fluids, such as Lytren, Pedialyte, Liquilyte or Infalyte or a less costly store brand.
- Give acetaminophen (Tylenol or less costly store brand). Follow the directions on the box carefully, or ask your child's doctor how much medicine to give.
 - **Do not give acetaminophen to babies younger than 3 months of age without a doctor's order.**
 - **Do not give your child more than 5 doses of acetaminophen in a 24-hour period.**
 - If your child has any type of liver problem, talk with the doctor before giving acetaminophen.

OR

- Give ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil or less costly store brand) every 6 hours. Follow the directions on the box carefully, or ask your child's doctor how much medicine to give.
 - **Do not give ibuprofen to babies younger than 6 months of age without a doctor's order.**
 - If your child has chickenpox, kidney problems or bleeding problems, talk with the doctor before giving ibuprofen.
 - Give this medicine with food or milk to decrease stomach upset.

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Fever, continued

It may take 60 to 90 minutes for these medicines to work.

- Check with your child's doctor or pharmacist before giving acetaminophen or ibuprofen with other medicines. This includes over-the-counter medicines like cough and cold medicines.
- Tell the doctor if your child is taking any vitamins, herbal products or other supplements or home remedies.

When can my child return to day care or school?

Keep your child home until they:

- Feel better.
- Have no fever without using medicines for 24 hours.

When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's doctor **right away** if your child has any of these:

- Does not smile or play for even a few minutes every 4 hours
- Shows signs of dehydration:
 - No urine in 6 hours in a baby younger than 12 months old
 - No urine in more than 8 hours in a child older than 12 months old
 - No tears when crying
 - Sunken eyes
 - Dry lips and mouth
- Vomits (throws up) more than 2 times
- Is not comfortable, even when held
- Seems to be breathing hard or fast even after the fever has been treated with medicine
- Has a new rash not yet seen by a doctor
- Has fever that lasts more than 3 days
- Complains of any continued pain, such as earache, pain with urinating or stomach pain
- Complains of a stiff neck
- Has a headache that does not get better with medicine, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- For a baby younger than 3 months old – has a fever of **100.4°F (38°C) or higher** rectally and has not been checked by a doctor yet **for the fever**.
- For a baby 3 to 24 months old – has a fever of **102.5°F (39.2°C) or higher** rectally and has not been checked by a doctor yet **for the fever**.

Also call if you have any questions or concerns about how your child looks or feels.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.