

what is fever?

Average body temperature ranges from 36.5–37.5°C (97.7°F–99.5°F). A fever is usually defined as a temperature above 38°C (100.4°F).

how to take a child's temperature?

Three ways to check a child's temperature include:

- Under the arm – for all children. This usually reads 0.5°C (32.9°F) lower than a temperature taken in the mouth. Leave in place for 2–3 minutes
- Under the tongue - for older children. Leave in place for 2–3 minutes
- Ear (tympanic) for children of all ages. This may be inaccurate if the technique is incorrect or if there's wax in the ear

what causes a fever?

Fever is usually a sign of infection, which most often is viral but can also be bacterial or rarely inflammatory disorders. A high fever does not necessarily mean your child has a serious illness. The fever itself is not harmful unless it reaches 42°C (107.6°F). If it rises quickly, it can occasionally cause febrile convulsion.

febrile convulsions

A small number of children under the age of 5 may have a fever-induced seizure (febrile convulsion) with a rapid rise or fall in temperature. They are frightening but usually have no lasting effects.



treating a fever

Recommendations for treatment of fever in children include:

- Dress your child in enough clothing so they are not shivering
- Tepid sponging (sponging with luke-warm water) may be used but only if it does not cause shivering or discomfort for the child
- Give small frequent feeds of clear fluids. If your child is under 6 months old, give extra boiled water, breast feeds or bottles. Do not worry if they refuse to eat, it is more important that they don't become dehydrated
- Watch for signs of worsening of fever and symptoms (see next below)
- The evidence of using paracetamol (e.g. Panadol) to reduce children's fever is inconsistent. If the fever is >38.5°C (101.3°F) and your child is miserable or suffering from pain from earache or sore throat, medication can then be given. Ensure only children's paracetamol / acetaminophen or ibuprofen is given. Paracetamol can be given every four hours, maximum 4 doses in 24 hours
- Seek medical advice if the fever persists for more than two days with medications

febrile convulsion management

Recommendations for the management of febrile convulsions in children include:

- Gently place your child on the floor
- Loosen clothing around head or neck
- Don't try to prevent the shaking
- Don't put anything in your child's mouth
- Roll your child onto his side. If he vomits, keep him on his side and clear his mouth out with your finger
- Don't give your child anything to drink until he is fully alert
- Call the doctor immediately

when to be concerned

- If your baby is under three months of age and has a persistent fever above 38°C (100.4°F)
- If your child is unusually sleepy, has extreme listlessness or irritability
- Refuses to drink fluids
- Has an unusual rash
- Has a severe headache or stiff neck
- Has unusual eye sensitivity to bright light
- Has difficulty breathing
- Has abdominal pain or pain when urinating
- Has had a febrile convulsion

When in doubt, always consult a doctor for further advice.