

Measuring and Managing the Fever

While no one likes to have a fever, it's actually a sign that the body is working to fight off an infection.

When a child feels warm to the touch and there's no obvious explanation – such as being overdressed in a warm room – it could mean that their body is responding normally to an infection.

The normal oral temperature is usually 98.6 degrees, but the body's average temperature can fluctuate between 97 and 100.4 degrees. The child is considered to have a fever when their temperature is more than 100.4 degrees. With viral illnesses, temperatures can range from 101 to 104 degrees and last for two to three days. When a fever is present, your doctor will want to assess both the temperature and the child's overall condition – how sick they act and feel.



Here are some things to do when your child becomes feverish:

- Give them plenty of liquids to guard against dehydration. Give your child water, soup, ice pops, and flavored gelatin. Oral rehydration solutions (like Pedialyte, Enfalyte, or store brands) are also a good choice. Avoid drinks with caffeine, including colas and tea, which can make dehydration worse by making kids pee more often.
- Offer children's acetaminophen or ibuprofen if your child is very uncomfortable, following dosing instructions carefully for your child's age and weight. **(Babies under 3 months with fever must be evaluated by the pediatrician before parents give medications.)** Never give aspirin to children; it has been linked to Reye's syndrome, a very dangerous disease.



- Cover them with a light blanket, and keep them out of cold drafts.
- Use a washcloth wet with tepid water to help cool their forehead, but avoid making the child chilled. Do not use alcohol rubs to reduce fever; it can be absorbed into the child's bloodstream.

Remember that the fever is helping your child, so don't use fever-reducing medications unless their temperature is more than 102 degrees or they are very uncomfortable. Even if you decide to give your child medication, their fever will go up and down until the illness runs its course. So if the child is sleeping, don't awaken them for medicines.

When your child has a fever, call your pediatrician immediately if any of the following are true:

- The child is less than 3 months of age and has a temperature of 100.4 or higher.
- The temperature is 104 degrees or higher for any child.
- The child looks or acts very sick.

When a fever persists for more than 24 hours, call your pediatrician if any of the following are true:

- The child is younger than 2 years.
- The temperature rises above 104 repeatedly for a child of any age.
- The fever lasts for more than three days.
- The fever went away and then returned.
- The fever lasts more than 24 hours without an apparent cause.

Tips on Taking Your Child's Temperature recommended for children ages 4 and up

- It is best to use a digital thermometer.
- Digital temporal artery thermometers can be used for all ages.
- Tympanic digital thermometer can be used on children age 6 months and older.
- Mercury thermometers should not be used.
- Instant-read temperature strips are not considered reliable or accurate, even though they are convenient and popular.

Your child's pediatrician should be your primary source of advice about your child's health.



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ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1 (757) 668-8246

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