

Fever in Children

This fact sheet helps you to know what's 'normal' and what you can expect to happen if your child develops a fever. It also tells you when you should become concerned and seek advice from a health professional.

Useful facts

- **What is fever?** Fever is a raised body temperature above the normal daily variation, which usually suggests an underlying infection.
- **Fever is often 'normal'** Mild feverish illness is a normal part of childhood – a natural, healthy and harmless response to help the body fight infection.
- **Fever is common** Between around 3 to 7 out of 10 pre-school children develop at least one episode of fever every six to 14 months.
- **Common causes** Common causes of fever include the common cold, ear infections, stomach bugs (*gastroenteritis*), throat- and travel-related infections.
- **Serious causes** Severe infections, such as pneumonia or meningitis, are in *rare* cases the main cause of a fever.
- **Children under six months** Any child under six months of age with a fever should be assessed by a health professional.

What can I expect to happen?

- ✓ **Fever gets better by itself** In most cases, fever is due to a common and harmless illness that gets better by itself – and your child won't need antibiotics.
- ✓ **Duration** Fever should not last for longer than five days.

What can I do to help my child – now and in the future?

- ✓ **Check your child's temperature** In children aged between four weeks and five years, use either an electronic or chemical dot thermometer in your child's arm pit, or an infra-red tympanic thermometer in the ear canal. If you haven't got a thermometer, use your judgement as to whether your child feels abnormally hot.
- ✓ **Clothing** Avoid over- or under-dressing your feverish child.
- ✓ **Heating and cooling** Keep your central heating down. Tepid sponging of children is no longer recommended.
- ✓ **Fluids** Offer your child regular fluids. If you're a breastfeeding mother, offer your child as many feeds as she/he will take.
- ✓ **Body checks** Check your child at night for signs of serious illness (see over).



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