

# Fever

## Part of the body's natural response

A child with a significant fever will have a body temperature above **38°C**. Your child may also feel tired, look pale, have a poor appetite, be irritable, have a headache or other aches and pains and feel generally unwell. Take the temperature from the armpit, using an electronic thermometer (don't use in the mouth of under 5s) or use an ear thermometer. Remember that measurements from under the arm are less accurate as the armpit is slightly cooler.

A fever is part of the body's natural response to fight infection and can often be left to run its course provided your child is drinking enough and is otherwise well. If your child is having trouble drinking, trying to reduce their temperature may help with this. This is important to prevent your child from becoming dehydrated, which can cause kidney problems. Your child's urine should be pale yellow - if it is darker, your child needs to drink more fluids.

Fevers are common in young children. They are usually caused by viral infections and clear up without treatment. However, a fever can occasionally be a sign of a more serious illness such as a severe bacterial infection of the blood (septicaemia), urinary tract infection, pneumonia or meningitis.

**You should also contact your GP if fever symptoms are not improving after 48 hours.** Check your child during the night.

Always seek medical advice if your child develops a fever soon after an operation, or soon after travelling abroad.

## GP says

When looking after a feverish child at home you should:

- Get the child to drink more (where a baby or child is breastfed the most appropriate fluid is breast milk).
- Look for signs of dehydration: reduced wet nappies, dry mouth, sunken eyes, no tears, poor overall appearance, sunken soft spot on baby's head.
- It is not advisable to give ibuprofen if your child is dehydrated.
- Know how to identify a meningitis rash.
- Check child during the night.

Source: NICE, Feverish illness in children/2013

## Young babies:

Always contact your GP or **NHS 111** if your child:

- Is under three months of age and has a temperature of **38°C** or above.
- Is between three and six months of age and has a temperature of **39°C** or above.
- Is over six months and shows other signs of being unwell - for example, they are floppy and drowsy or you are concerned about them.

## **Older children:**

A little fever isn't usually a worry. Contact your GP if your child seems unusually ill, or has a high temperature which doesn't come down. It's important to encourage your child to drink as much fluid as possible. Water is best.

## **To help reduce temperature:**

- Undress to nappy/pants.
- Keep room at comfortable temp (18°C).
- Encourage your child to drink more (even little amounts often).
- Give **sugar-free** paracetamol or ibuprofen in the correct recommended dose for your child (see packaging).

### **1**

My toddler is hot and grumpy.

### **2**

Have you tried infant paracetamol? Have you made sure they are drinking lots of fluids?

### **3**

If their temperature remains over 38°C and doesn't come down, contact your GP.