

Treating a Fever at Home

When trying to lower a fever:

Take Medication

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) help reduce fever in children and adults. Make sure to read the instructions and take the correct dosage.
- For children, make sure you know how much they weigh, so you may give the correct dose. In children 3 months or younger, call your doctor before giving medicines. Do not use ibuprofen in children 6 months or younger.

Stay Cool

- Remove layers of clothing and blankets, even if the person has the chills. Dress in lightweight clothing, with a light blanket or sheet for sleep.
- Keep the bedroom at a comfortable temperature (not too hot or too cold). Turn on a fan, if necessary.
- A lukewarm bath or sponge bath may help cool someone with a fever. Do not use cold baths, ice, or alcohol rubs. These cool the skin, but can worsen a fever by causing shivering, which raises the core body temperature. It is most effective to give a lukewarm bath, after a person has taken a fever reducing medication, so that their temperature stays down post-bath.

Hydrate

- Everyone, especially children, should drink plenty of fluids. Water, popsicles, soup, pedialyte, and gelatin are great options.
- If you breast-feed your baby, nurse him or her more often. If you use a bottle to feed your baby, increase the number of feedings to make up for lost fluids.
- Ask your doctor if you need to use an oral rehydration solution (ORS) if your baby still isn't getting enough fluids from formula or the breast.

Rest

- Take naps and get a full night's sleep.
- For children, encourage quiet activities.

When to Seek Emergency Care for a Fever

1. You have an infant 3 months or younger with a rectal temperature of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher. Even a slight fever can be a sign of a serious infection in very young infants.
2. If an adult or child has the following:
 - Difficulty breathing or blue hands, lips, or feet.
 - Shows signs of serious dehydration such as little to no urination, tearless crying, lack of energy, paleness, and clammy skin.
 - Is unconscious or having a seizure. Febrile seizures can occur in the response to fever but are almost always harmless. A child's first seizure should be treated as an emergency to rule out a more serious problem.

RESOURCES

US National Library of Medicine www.nlm.nih.gov

Healthy Children, from the American Academy of Pediatrics www.healthychildren.org

America's Best Hospitals for Emergency Care
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Sources:

<https://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003090.htm>
<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/news/Pages/AAP-Issues-Advice-on-Managing-Fevers-in-Children.aspx>
<http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/feverhtml?ref=search>

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TREATING FEVERS IN CHILDREN AND ADULTS

- Understanding Fevers
- How to Take Your Temperature
- When to Call the Doctor
- Treating a Fever at Home
- When to Seek Emergency Care for a Fever
- Resources

Understanding Fevers

A fever occurs when the body's temperature rises above its usual 98.6 degrees. Medically, fevers are not considered significant unless they reach a certain degree, depending upon the age of the person. In most cases, fevers are beneficial; they are the body's defense mechanism against viruses, bacteria, fungi, drugs, or other toxins. The heightened internal temperature of the body makes it an uncomfortable place for germs to thrive. A fever, in itself, is not an illness, but a symptom.

How to Take Your Temperature

You can usually tell that you or your child is warmer than usual by feeling a forehead, but a thermometer can truly detect a fever. It is recommended that you use a digital thermometer to take temperature either rectally (in young children) or orally. Other methods for taking temperature are available, such as temporal artery (across the forehead), tympanic (in the ear), and axillary (under the arm); however, these methods are not highly accurate.

Rectal temperature

If your child is younger than 3 years old, taking a rectal temperature gives the best reading. The following is how to take a rectal temperature with a digital thermometer:

1. Clean the end of the thermometer with rubbing alcohol or soap and water. Rinse it with cool water. Do not rinse it with hot water.

2. Put a small amount of lubricant, such as petroleum jelly, on the end.
3. Place your child belly down across your lap or on a firm surface. Hold him by placing your palm against his lower back, just above his bottom. Or place your child face up and bend his legs to his chest. Rest your free hand against the back of the thighs.
4. With the other hand, turn the thermometer on and insert it 1/2 inch to 1 inch into the anal opening. Do not insert it too far. Hold the thermometer in place loosely with 2 fingers, keeping your hand cupped around your child's bottom. Keep it there for about 1 minute, until you hear the "beep." Then remove and check the digital reading.

Oral temperature

Once your child is 4 or 5 years of age, you can take his temperature by mouth. The following are steps on how to take an oral temperature:

1. Clean the thermometer with lukewarm soapy water or rubbing alcohol. Rinse with cool water.
2. Turn the thermometer on and place the tip under the tongue toward the back of the mouth. Hold in place for about 1 minute, until you hear the "beep." Check the digital reading.
3. For a correct reading, wait at least 15 minutes after a hot or cold drink had been consumed before putting the thermometer in the mouth.



When to Call the Doctor

AGE	TEMPERATURE	ACTION
0-3 Months	100.4 F or above (taken rectally)	Call your doctor and take infant to the emergency room.
4 Months-2 Years Old	102 F or above (taken rectally)	Call your doctor right away.
3 Years Old - Adult	Above 102 F (taken rectally for children age 3 & younger, or taken orally for children older than 3)	Call your doctor if the fever lasts longer than 48 hours

Other reasons to call your doctor:

- You observe other symptoms in addition to the fever that suggest you or your child have an illness that may need to be treated, such as a rash, sore throat, earache, or cough
- You are showing initial signs of dehydration (infrequent urination, unquenchable thirst)
- You have a serious medical illness, such as a heart problem, sickle cell anemia, diabetes, cystic fibrosis, COPD, or other chronic lung problems
- You have trouble with your immune system (from chronic steroid therapy, a bone marrow or organ transplant, spleen removal, HIV, or cancer treatment)
- You recently traveled to another country
- You are concerned and would like medical advice

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