



Fever

Patient and Family Education

Facts about fever

Fever is a common problem with illness in children. It often results from an infection caused by a virus or bacteria (germ). Some infections are serious and need to be cared for in the hospital. Many others can be cared for at home.

NOTE: For babies less than 24 months old – take the temperature in the rectum (the opening where the bowel movement or stool comes out). Other methods are not as accurate in infants.

Should I treat my child's fever?

Your child's doctor will talk with you about specific care for your child. In general, not all fevers need to be treated. Some reasons to treat a fever include if your child:

- Is not comfortable when the fever is high.
- Will not drink enough fluids when the fever is high.

How do I treat a fever?

Your child's doctor will talk with you about specific care for your child. Some general guidelines to follow include:

- Give acetaminophen (Tylenol® or other less costly store brand). Follow the directions on the box carefully or ask your child's doctor how much medicine to give.
 - This is often the only medicine a child with fever needs to feel better.
 - It may take 60 to 90 minutes for these medicines to work.
 - **Do not give acetaminophen to babies under 3 months of age without a doctor's order.**
 - **Do not give your child more than 5 doses of acetaminophen in a 24-hour period.**
- If you give your child the correct dose of acetaminophen every four hours and he is still not comfortable, you may give him ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil® or other less costly store brand) every six hours instead. If you do this, stop giving him the acetaminophen.
 - **Do not give ibuprofen to babies less than 6 months of age without a doctor's order.**
 - If your child has chickenpox, asthma, kidney problems or bleeding problems, ask your child's doctor before giving ibuprofen.
 - Follow the directions on the box carefully or ask his doctor how much medicine to give.
- **Do not give any aspirin.**
- Check with your child's doctor or pharmacist before giving acetaminophen or ibuprofen with other medicines. This includes over-the-counter medicines.
- Tell your child's doctor if your child is taking any vitamins, herbal products or other supplements or home remedies.
- Dress your child very lightly. Do not bundle or cover with a blanket.
- Give him lots of cool liquids.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room right away.

This is general information and is not specific medical advice for your child. Always consult your child's doctor or other healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns about the care or health of your child. A Children's Healthcare of Atlanta pediatric advice nurse is available 24 hours a day at 404-250-KIDS.

Fever, continued

When should I call the doctor?

Call your child's doctor **right away** if your child has one or more of the following symptoms:

- He does not smile or play for even a few minutes every four-hours
- He shows signs of dehydration (drying out):
 - No urine in six hours in an infant younger than 12 months old
 - No urine in more than eight hours in a child older than 12 months old
 - No tears when crying
 - Sunken eyes
 - Dry lips and mouth
- Vomits more than 2 times.
- He is not comfortable, even when held
- He seems to be breathing hard or fast even after the fever has been treated with medicine.
- He develops a rash
- The fever lasts more than three days
- He complains of any persistent pain such as earache, pain with voiding or stomach pain.
- For a baby less than 2 months old with **any fever** who has not yet been checked by a doctor for the fever.
- For a baby 2-6 months old with a **fever more than 102.2°F (rectally)** who has not yet been checked by a doctor for the fever.
- For a baby 6-24 months old with a **fever more than 103°F (rectally)** who has not yet been checked by a doctor for the fever.
- You have any concerns about how your child looks or feels.

Check with your child's doctor about when to call for a fever if your child:

- Sees a doctor or specialist for a medical condition on a regular basis.
- Has had urinary tract infections (UTI) in the past.

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