

Fever Basics

What is it?

When body temperature is above normal, it is called a fever. Normal body temperature goes up and down throughout the day. It is lowest in the early morning and highest in the late afternoon.

Each part of the body where the temperature is measured has a different range of normal. A child has a fever if:

- oral temperature (under the tongue) is over 99.5° F (37.5° C)
- rectal temperature (in the rectum) is over 100.4° F (38.0° C)

Signs of a fever

Your child

- feels warm or hot to the touch.
- has a pink or red face.
- eyes look glassy.
- shivers or complains of feeling cold.
- complains of muscle aches.
- does not want to eat, but may be more thirsty than usual.

If your child has any of these signs, take his or her temperature.



Call the doctor right away,

or if it is after your doctor's office hours,
take your child to the Emergency Room if:

- The child is under 3 months old and has a fever of 100.4° F (38.0° C) or more
- The child is between 3 months and 36 months old and has a fever higher than 102° F (38.9° C)
- The child is over 36 months old, has a fever higher than 102° F (38.9° C) and
— The child had the fever for more than 48 hours and you don't know why

- The child is acting very sick
 - It is hard to wake up the child
 - The child has a seizure
 - The child has trouble breathing
 - The child has a stiff neck, a bad headache, a sore throat, bad ear pain, a rash, throws up, or has loose stool.
 - The child cries when moved.
 - The child had a fever, it went away for more than 24 hours, and now the fever is back.
- The child has a central line and has a fever of 101° F (38.3° C)

Do at home:

For children under 3 months old

- If the child is under 3 months old and has a fever of 100.4° F (38.0° C), call the doctor or clinic right away. If it is after your doctor's office hours, take the child to Urgent Care or the Emergency Room after you give medicine.

For children between 3 months and 36 months old

- If the child is comfortable, and is acting normally with fever less than 102° F, (38.9° C) you do not need to treat it. The body responds to infection with a fever.
- If the child is uncomfortable and has a fever, give children's acetaminophen (Tylenol, Tempra, Feverall) every 4 to 6 hours in the dose printed on the package. If you are not sure how much to give, ask the pharmacist in the drug store.
- If you are giving the liquid form of this medicine, use a dropper, medicine cup, or marked measuring spoon. The teaspoons we use for eating are not exact measures.
- The purpose of the medicine is to make the child feel better, not make his or her fever disappear.
- If your child is throwing up, he or she may not be able to take medicine by mouth. You can buy acetaminophen that you can put into your child's bottom (rectum) (suppository form).

For children over 6 months old

- The medicine ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil) can also be used to bring down a fever. Do not give ibuprofen to children under 6 months old.

- Keep track of how much your child drinks. A fever causes the body to lose fluid faster. Make sure your child does not get too dry (**dehydrated**).
 - The child must drink, but don't force him to eat solids if he is not hungry.
 - Offer your child something to drink every half-hour. This fluid may be juice, ice pops, soup, or tea.

You should know:

- Never give a child aspirin. It increases the risk your child could get Reye's syndrome.
- Your child's breathing will become faster than normal with a high fever as the body tries to get rid of the heat through the lungs.
- Besides viral and bacterial infections, there are many other causes for the body temperature to rise, such as:
 - exercise especially in heat or when overbundled
 - hot weather. Watch the child for signs of heat stroke (dry, hot skin, fast breathing, fast pulse, confusion)
 - hot bath
 - putting too many clothes and blankets on the child, especially in infants
 - not enough fluid in the body (dehydration)
 - certain medications
- After your child has had a fever, he shouldn't go back to school or day care until the fever has been normal for 24 hours.

Now that you've read this:

- Show your nurse or doctor how you would take your child's temperature. (Check when done.)
- Tell your nurse or doctor when you would call the doctor about your child's temperature. (Check when done.)
- Tell your nurse or doctor how you would treat your child's fever. (Check when done.)

To learn more, ask your nurse or doctor for the handout

- Fever (#666)
- How to Take Your Child's Temperature (#533)



If you have any questions or concerns,
 call your child's doctor or call _____

If you want to know more about child health and illness,
visit our library at The Emily Center at Phoenix Children's Hospital
1919 East Thomas Road
Phoenix, AZ 85016
602-546-1400
866-933-6459
www.phoenixchildrens.com

Disclaimer

The information provided at this site is intended to be general information, and is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended to take the place of examination, treatment, or consultation with a physician. Phoenix Children's Hospital urges you to contact your physician with any questions you may have about a medical condition.

Thursday, March 13, 2008 • DRAFT to family review
#961 • From Do At Home or Call the Doctor; revised by Eileen Mitchell, MN, RN and Jackie Beals



The Emily Center

Fever Basics

First Aid and Home Care

Si usted desea esta información en español,
por favor pídasela a su enfermero o doctor.

Name of Health Care Provider: _____ Number: 961

For office use: Date returned: _____ db nb

Family Review of Handout

Health care providers: Please teach families with this handout.

Families: Please let us know what you think of this handout.

Would you say this handout is hard to read? Yes No

easy to read? Yes No

Please circle the parts of the handout that were hard to understand.

Would you say this handout is interesting to read? Yes No

Why or why not?

Would you do anything differently after reading
this handout? Yes No

If yes, what?

After reading this handout, do you have any
questions about the subject? Yes No
If yes, what?

Is there anything you don't like about the drawings?

Yes

No

If yes, what?

What changes would you make in this handout to make it better or easier to understand?

Please return your review of this handout to your nurse or doctor or send it to the address below.

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Thank you for helping us!