

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 electric thermometer (don't use in the mouth of under 5's) or use an ear thermometer. Remember that measurements from under the arm are less accurate as the arm is slightly cooler. Please note that forehead thermometers are unreliable and are therefore not recommended for use.

A fever is part of the body's natural response to infection and can often be left to run its course provided your child is drinking enough and is otherwise well. It is important to prevent your child from becoming dehydrated, which can lead to more serious problems. As a guide, your child's urine should be pale yellow - if it is darker, your child may need to drink more fluids.

Fevers are common in young children. They are usually caused by viral infections and clear up without treatment. Take your Minor Ailments Passport to the Pharmacist for advice and 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 being 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 your child ibuprofen if they are dehydrated.
- Know how to identify a meningitis rash.
- check your child during the night.

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 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 and you are concerned about them.

Older children:

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

- It is important to ensure your child drinks as much fluid as possible.
- Keep the room at a comfortable temperature (18°C).
- Give liquid paracetamol or ibuprofen in the correct recommended dose for your child. Do not give both at the same time.
- Aspirin should not be given to children under 16.

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 and seems upset.

2

Have you tried liquid 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 Doctor.