



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Early Childhood Health and Wellness

Fever and Your Child

What is a fever?

Fever is when body temperature is above normal. A fever is not an illness. Rather, it is a sign or symptom of sickness.

Signs and Symptoms of Sickness

- Tired or fussy
- Glassy eyes, runny nose, cough
- Loss of appetite, throwing up, diarrhea
- Sweating, shivering, chills
- General weakness, muscle aches
- Red face, hot skin
- Higher-than-normal body temperature

Treating a Fever at Home

- Give your child fluids
- Dress your child lightly to help keep him cool
- Sponge with lukewarm water
- Check temperature every 4 hours in the day
- Give a fever-reducing medication to help lower body temperature. Check with your health care professional for instructions on proper dosage.



Checking Your Child's Temperature

There are two scales for measuring temperature: F (Fahrenheit) and C (Celsius). Temperature can be taken orally or rectally. Digital thermometers are very accurate, but temperatures can vary by site. When taking your child's temperature, record the the temperature, time, and site to relay this information to your health care professional. The following temperatures are considered to be **normal** and **do not indicate a fever**:

- **Child from birth to 3 years old**
Rectal: 100.4°F (38°C) or less
- **Child 4 years old and older**
Oral: 99.0°F (37.2°C) or less



When should I call the doctor?

Age Range	When to Call the Doctor
3 months (12 weeks) or less	100.4°F (38.0°C) or higher
3 - 6 months (12 - 24 weeks)	102.5°F (39.2°C) or higher
6 months (24 weeks) or older	104.0°F (40.0°C) or higher
2 years old or less	Fever lasts for more than 24 hours
Any Age	Fever lasts for more than 3 days. Fever rises above 104°F (40°C) repeatedly

Call your child's doctor right away if your child has a fever and:

- looks very ill
- is unusually drowsy
- is very fussy
- has other symptoms, such as:
 - stiff neck
 - severe headache
 - severe sore throat
 - severe ear pain
 - unexplained rash
 - repeated vomiting or diarrhea
- has signs of dehydration, such as:
 - dry mouth
 - sunken soft spot
 - significantly fewer wet diapers
 - is not able to take in fluids
- has been in a very hot place, such as an overheated car
- has had a seizure

Disclaimer: The information contained in this presentation should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. More information can be found at <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/fever/Pages/default.aspx>