

Fever in children

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS



FEVER

A fever is an increase in your child's body temperature. This is common, but it does cause anxiety for parents. Most children recover quickly and without problems. Fever can be a sign of infection and serious illness in a very few cases.

Measuring your child's fever

If you are at home and feel that your child has a fever and you have access to a thermometer, then you can measure your child's temperature. Normal body temperature is variable, but as a rule, 36 to 37.2 degrees C is your normal body temperature. A fever is when the temperature goes above 37.5 degrees C.

Fever in children under 3 months old is rare and can be a sign of serious illness.

If your child is under 3 months old and has a fever of 38 or higher, or between 3 and 6 months old with a temperature of 39 or higher, you should seek advice from your General Practitioner or the hospital.

In hospital we will measure your child's temperature either by using an electronic thermometer under their arm or in their ear.

WHAT HAPPENS IN HOSPITAL?

Your child will have a set of observations taken including their temperature. The doctor or nurse will ask you questions and examine your child to see if they can find out what is causing the fever. Most children with fevers are not seriously unwell and can be cared for at home.

Sometimes the doctor or nurse will not have been able to find a cause for your child's fever, even after a full examination. Antibiotics should not be prescribed for your child if a cause is not found.

What happens now?

Most children can be cared for at home by their parents. In a few cases the doctor or nurse looking after you will decide that your child may need further tests in hospital, and will arrange for these to be done.

My child is going home. What can I do to make him/her feel comfortable?

- ❖ Offer your child regular drinks.
- ❖ Do not over or under dress your child.
- ❖ Do not sponge your child with water.
- ❖ If your child appears miserable because of high temperature, offer them some Paracetamol or Ibuprofen syrup.
- ❖ Be aware of the signs of dehydration (being dry or not having enough fluid). These are dry mouth, dry nappy, no tears, sunken eyes, and if they are a baby, a sunken soft spot.

When to seek further advice

You should seek medical advice if:

- ❖ Your child develops a rash. Do the tumbler test here. If your child develops spots or a rash, press a glass tumbler firmly against the rash. If you can see the spots through the glass and they do not fade, this is a non-blanching rash. If this rash is present seek medical advice immediately.
- ❖ Your child has a fit.
- ❖ Your child's health gets worse.
- ❖ The fever lasts more than 5 days.
- ❖ You are worried that your child is dehydrated or dry.
- ❖ You have concerns about looking after your child at home.

Using Paracetamol and Ibuprofen

Paracetamol and Ibuprofen can help to lower your child's temperature and make them feel better. They do not treat the cause of fever and sometimes they do not bring the temperature down to normal. If your child is miserable because they have a fever, offer them Paracetamol in the first instance. If this does not bring the temperature down and they are still feeling miserable, then it is reasonable to offer them some Ibuprofen. Always follow the instructions on the bottle, and do not give them more than is recommended.

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