

How to Take Care of Your Child with a Fever

A fever is a rise in body temperature. Normally, your body temperature is between 36.8 – 37.2°C or 98.2 – 99.0° F. When your body temperature is higher than 38.0°C or 100.4° F, we call that a fever.

A fever is the way your body fights infection. This fever means the defense system in your child’s body is working to keep your child safe. Many people have heard that teething causes fever in babies, but this isn’t true.

HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR CHILD AT HOME

- + Try to keep your child comfy. Dress them in light clothing. If they are having chills, give them a light blanket.
- + Make sure your child is drinking enough. Water and juice are good options. If your child isn’t thirsty, make sure they still drink a little at a time. **A good rule is to give them at least 1 Tablespoon (15 ml) every 10-15 minutes.**
- + If your baby is breastfeeding, keep feeding them.
- + When bathing your child, use lukewarm water.
- + DO NOT use ice packs or rubbing alcohol to try and cool your child down.

How do I know if my child is drinking enough?

- + If your child has a fever and isn’t drinking enough, they can lose water and become dehydrated or “dry”. Make sure your child has wet diapers or is going to the bathroom at least every 4-6 hours. If the pee is dark in colour, your child might be dehydrated and needs to drink some more fluid.

What medications can I give my child?

- + If your child has aches and pains, you can give them:
 - + **Acetaminophen** (also called Tylenol or Tempra)
 - Give them ___ mg every ___ hours
 - Do not give more than ___ mg in 24 hours.
 - + **OR Ibuprofen** (also called Advil or Motrin).
 - Give them ___ mg every ___ hour
 - Do not give more than ___ mg in 24 hours.

These medications will help your child feel better while they heal. These medications will help decrease the temperature but won’t bring it back to normal.

- + **DO NOT give your child Aspirin (ASA). This isn’t the same as Acetaminophen (Tylenol), and it can be dangerous for children.**

When did I give my child medication?	Which medication did I give?	How much medication did I give?

WHEN TO GET HELP

Go to the nearest Emergency Department if your child is experiencing any of the following:

- + They are having trouble breathing. You can tell they are having trouble breathing if their breathing is faster and noisier than usual, they can't catch their breath, or they are sucking in their ribs and stomach when they breathe.
 - **Call 911 and ask for an ambulance** if you are worried about your child's breathing or color.
- + They have a seizure.
- + They are very sleepy, hard to wake up or won't stay awake.
- + They are looking or acting much sicker.
- + They are confused or don't recognize you.
- + They have a rash on their skin that looks like small purple dots that do not go away when you press on them.
- + Their skin is cool and very pale or grey.
- + They are very cranky, and they cry when you try to touch them or move them.
- + They haven't peed in 12 hours (8 hours if they are a baby).

Take your child to your family doctor if:

- + Their fever gets worse or doesn't improve in the next 2 days.

TO LEARN MORE ASK

- + Your family doctor.
- + Visit www.aboutkidshealth.ca
- + HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf or hard of hearing) or go online to www.HealthLinkBC.ca

RECOMMENDED FOLLOW UP

- Follow up with your primary care provider in ___ days.

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Find this information sheet on the BC Emergency Medicine Network website:
www.bcemn.ca/clinical_resource/how-to-take-care-of-your-child-with-a-fever

RELEVANT RESOURCES

- + Visit www.aboutkidshealth.ca to learn more about taking care of your child with a fever.