



# Caring for Your Child's Fever

## What is the normal temperature of a child?

A child has the same body temperature range as an adult:

- 35°C – 37.5°C – when taken orally (by mouth)
- 34.7°C – 37.3°C – when taken under armpit

## What is a fever?

- A fever is the body's natural way to fight infections and results in a raised body temperature.
- High fevers can cause seizures, hallucinations, and dehydration, and need to be prevented.
- **Mild fevers are common in healthy young children. They are generally not harmful and can be managed at home with medication.**

## How can I tell if my child has a fever?

If your child is under 5 years of age, the best way to measure their body temperature is by using a digital thermometer under their armpit.

**Do not use a glass mercury thermometer to take a temperature.** If it breaks, it can cause serious poisoning to the child and the family.

### METHOD:

- Place the thermometer high up in the centre of the child's armpit.
- Make sure it is touching bare skin on all sides. Hold the child's arm close to his/her body.
- Comfort and distract the child while taking his/her temperature.
- When the thermometer beeps, remove it gently and read the temperature.
- Older children can have their temperature taken orally (by mouth).
- Place the end of the thermometer under their tongue. (Remind the child not to bite down on the thermometer).
- When the thermometer beeps, remove it gently and read the temperature.

- **Wait 15 minutes after your child has a drink before taking their mouth temperature, because the drink will affect the temperature result.**

### These methods are not recommended:

- The rectal (bum) method because it could cause a potential injury.
- Ear (tympanic) thermometers are quick, but the result may not be accurate.
- Forehead strips and pacifier thermometers are not accurate.

## How can I treat my child's fever?

### Comfort measures include:

- dressing your child lightly and covering with a sheet;
- bathing your child in lukewarm (never cold) water for less than 15 minutes (stop the bath if your child starts shivering);
- encourage your infant to breastfeed or formula feed as often as possible to prevent dehydration (they do not need to be given additional water);
- encourage your child to drink water or juice (no cola products) often; and
- encourage your child to take popsicles, Jell-O and ice chips if they feel like it.

### Medications:

**Medication will not solve the cause of the fever, but can make your child more comfortable.**

**Acetaminophen (Tylenol®, Tempra®) can be given for fever or soreness. ASA (Aspirin®) should NOT be given to anyone under 20 years of age due to the risk of Reye's syndrome.**

Children over 6 months of age can receive ibuprofen (Advil®, Motrin®) if they are drinking well. **It is not recommended to use acetaminophen and ibuprofen together in a 24 hour period.**

Dosages for Various Forms of Acetaminophen								
Weight (kg)	Weight (lbs)	Single Dose (mg)	Infant Drops 80 mg per 1 mL	Children's Liquid Syrup 160 mg per 5 mL (1 tsp)	Children's Meltable or Chewable tablets 80 mg per tablet	Junior Meltable or Chewable tablets 160 mg per tablet	Suppository 120 mg each	Suppository 325 mg each
2.5-5.4	6-11	40 mg	.5 dropper (0.5 mL)	-	-	-	-	-
5.5-7.9	12-17	80 mg	1 dropper (1 mL)	-	-	-	1 suppository	-
8-10.9	18-23	120 mg	1.5 droppers (1.5 mL)	-	1.5 tablets	-	1.5 suppositories	-
11-15.9	24-35	160 mg	2 droppers (2 mL)	1 tsp (5 mL)	2 tablets	1 tablet	2 suppositories	-
16-21.9	36-47	240 mg	-	1.5 tsp (7.5 mL)	3 tablets	1.5 tablets	-	1 suppository

Acetaminophen is available in several forms: drops, syrup, tablet or rectal suppositories.

- **Shake liquids well before using.**
- **Always check your child's weight so that they receive the right dosage of medication.**
- **Doses may be repeated every 4-6 hours until the fever drops.**
- **Do not give your child more than 5 doses in a 24 hour period.**

### When should I be concerned about my child's fever?

Take your child to your local hospital emergency department immediately if he/she seems to be getting sicker and has any one of the following symptoms:

- has a fever over 38°C and is under three months of age;
- has a temperature over 39°C taken by mouth or armpit;
- received acetaminophen and still has a temperature over 39°C after 30-60 minutes has gone by;
- has had a fever for more than 3 full days, cries when going to the bathroom, or if his/her urine (pee) smells bad;

- seems confused or delirious;
- does not use an arm or leg normally;
- refuses to stand or put weight on his/her legs;
- develops small purple spots on his/her skin (that may look like bruises or a rash);
- has problems breathing;
- cries constantly and you can not settle him/her;
- has a fit (seizure, convulsion, shaking);
- has repeated vomiting and/or diarrhea;
- if you have difficulty waking your child (fever may make children sleepy, but they should awaken easily and be able to interact with you), or
- his/her skin colour does not look right or becomes grey, pale or blue.

***For more information, contact:***

***HealthLine – 24 hours a day, at***

***1-877-800-0002, for health advice;***

***OR your local public health office;***

***OR your physician or nurse practitioner.***

References: Canadian Pediatric Society (2010) [www.cps.ca](http://www.cps.ca); The Hospital for Sick Children (2010) [www.sickkids.ca](http://www.sickkids.ca); [www.tylenol.ca](http://www.tylenol.ca) (2010).