

## Fever: Brief Version

### What is a fever?

A fever means the body temperature is above normal. Your child has a fever if:

- The rectal, ear, or temporal artery temperature is over 100.4°F (38°C).
- The temperature taken by mouth or pacifier is over 100°F (37.8°C).
- The armpit temperature is over 99.0°F (37.2°C).
- The ear temperature is not a good way to check babies under 6 months old.

Fever helps fight infections. Most fevers are not harmful. They may last 2 or 3 days.

### How can I take care of my child?

- **Use medicine only if the child needs it.** Remember that fever helps your child fight the infection. Use medicine only if the fever is over 102°F (39°C) and your child is uncomfortable.
  - You can give acetaminophen (Tylenol) to children older than 3 months. Fever medicine lowers the fever by 2 to 3°F (1 to 1.5°C).
  - You may want to give your child ibuprofen instead. Ibuprofen (Advil) works 2 hours longer than acetaminophen. Give the right dose for your child's weight, every 6 to 8 hours, as needed. You can give ibuprofen to children over 6 months of age.
  - Do not use acetaminophen and ibuprofen together unless your child's doctor tells you to do so.
- **Do not give your child or teen aspirin.**
- **Sponge your child if the fever does not go down.** Sponge your child if your child's temperature stays over 104°F (40°C) 30 minutes after your child has taken acetaminophen or ibuprofen. Always give your child acetaminophen or ibuprofen first. Sit your child in only 2 inches of lukewarm water. Sponge off the child's skin. If your child shivers, stop sponging or put in more warm water.
- **Have your child drink a lot of cold fluids.**
- **Have your child wear as little clothing as possible.** Do not bundle up your child. It may make the fever go higher.

For fevers of 100 to 102°F (37.8 to 38.9°C), cold fluids and little clothing may be all your child needs. Fever medicines are rarely needed. Fevers help the body fight the infection.

### Call your child's doctor right away if:

- Your child is less than 3 months old and has a fever.
- Your child's fever is over 104°F (40°C).
- Your child has a seizure.
- Your child looks or acts very sick.

### Call your child's doctor within 24 hours if:

- Your child is 3 to 6 months old (unless the fever is due to an immunization shot).

- Your child has had a fever more than 24 hours and you don't know what is causing it AND your child is less than 2 years old.
- Your child has had a fever for more than 3 days.
- The fever went away for over 24 hours and then came back.
- You have other concerns or questions.

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