

Low Body Temperature - Normal

Definition

- Most temperatures measured below 98.6 F (37 C) are normal. The number 98.6 F is only our average daily temperature.
- Temps below 98.6 F (37 C) are almost always part of our normal daily temperature range. These children do not feel cold or have any symptoms.
- If the temperature goes below 96.8 F (36 C), however, it is considered abnormal. The cause is often exposure to cold weather or other cool conditions. These children have symptoms of feeling cold.

Health Information

Normal Range of Body Temperature During Every 24 Hours

- Rectal Temps: A reading of 98.6 F (37 C) is just the average rectal temperature. It normally can be as low as 96.8 F (36 C) in the morning to a high of 100.3 F (37.9 C) in the late afternoon. Ear thermometers and forehead digital thermometers have similar normal ranges.
- Oral Temps: A reading of 97.6 F (36.5 C) is just the average oral temperature. It normally can be as low as 95.8 F (35.5 C) in the morning to a high of 99.9 F (37.7 C) in the late afternoon.

Symptoms from Cold Exposure

- The person feels cold and wants to put on another layer of clothing.
- Cold hands and feet usually occur first. Reason: The body tries to conserve heat by reducing blood flow to the most distant parts of the body.
- Shivering occurs next. It creates heat and raises the body's temperature to normal. Shivering starts if the body's temperature drops below normal range. That means below 96.8 F (36 C).
- Children with low temps from normal daily temperature variation do not have any of these symptoms.

Low Temperatures Without Exposure to Cold Weather: Overlooked Causes

- Cool indoor air from air-conditioner or swamp cooler
- Getting wet also causes the body temperature to drop. Reason: the cooling effects from the moisture drying from our skin. Examples are:
 - Showers or baths
 - Playing in water, wading pools, swimming pools
 - Wet clothing from rain
 - Wet diaper

Care Advice

1. Low Body Temperatures are Almost Always Normal:

- Your child feels fine.
- Your child's temperature is low but normal.
- Our body temperature normally changes during the day.
- It is not abnormal unless it's below 96.8 F (36 C) by rectum, ear or forehead.
- It is not abnormal unless it's below 95.8 (35.5 C) by mouth.
- Your child does not need any treatment.
- Future: You don't need to take the temperature in children who are well or feel a little cold.

2. **Children Who Feel Cold and Have a Low Body Temperatures - Treatment:**

- Mild (normal) hypothermia is the medical term used to describe when a child's temperature is just below normal.
- Causes include cold weather or exposure to cool rooms from air conditioning.
- Getting wet (such as from a bath, swimming or wet clothes) can also cause body temperature to drop slightly until a person is warmed.
- Simple measures like warm blankets and warm drinks can usually bring the temperature up to the normal range.
- If your child is very cold, a warm bath will help.

3. **Rewarming Technique:**

- Bring your child into a warm room.
- Remove any wet/cold clothing. Put your child in dry clothing and wrap in warm blankets. Can prewarm blankets in a dryer.
- If your child is very cold, a warm bath is the quickest way to warm up. The water should be pleasantly warm. Caution: avoid overly hot water.
- Immersion in this warm water should continue until the child feels warm.
- Don't get the head or hair wet (Reason: wet hair causes continued cooling).
- Caution: Avoid using heating pads, thermal chemical packs, heat lamps or other heating devices to rewarm your child. (Reason: risk of burns.)

4. **Offer Warm Fluids:**

- For children under 1 year, breastfeed your baby or offer them warm formula.
- For children over 1 year, offer warm fluids to drink. Examples are hot chocolate or hot apple juice.

Call Your Doctor If

- Rectal, ear or forehead temperature remains below 96.8 F (36 C) after rewarming
- Oral temperature remains below 95.8 F (35.5 C) after rewarming

Pediatric Care Advice

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