

# Fever (Baby)

## Definition

Your baby has a fever if:

- Rectal, Ear or Forehead temperature: 100.4° F (38.0° C) or higher.
- Under the arm (Armpit) temperature: 99° F (37.2° C) or higher.
- Caution: birth to 3 months. These babies need to be seen if they have fever. Do not give any fever medicine before being seen.

## Health Information

### Causes

- Main cause: colds and other viral infections.
- Fever may be the only symptom for the first 24 hours. This often occurs with a viral illness. The start of symptoms (runny nose, cough, loose stools) is often delayed. In the case of Roseola, fever may be the only symptom for 2 or 3 days.
- Most often, you won't know the cause of the fever until other symptoms develop. This may take 24 hours.
- Bacterial infections (such as with ear or kidney infections) also cause fever.
- Teething does not cause fever.

### Fever and Crying

- Fever on its own shouldn't cause much crying.
- Frequent crying in a child with fever is caused by pain until proven otherwise.
- Hidden causes of pain can be ear infections and sore throats.

### Normal Temperature Range

- Rectal or Forehead. A reading of 98.6° F (37° C) is just the average temp. A normal low can be 96.8° F (36° C) in the morning. It can change to a high of 100.3° F (37.9° C) late in the day. This is a normal range.

## Care Advice

### 1. Key Points

- Having a fever means your child has a new infection.
- It's most likely caused by a virus.
- You may not know the cause of the fever until other symptoms develop. This may take 24 hours.
- For sick children, most fevers are good. They help the body fight infection.
- Here is some care advice that should help.

## 2. **Fever Medicine**

- For fevers 100°-102° F (37.8°- 39° C), fever medicine is not needed. Reason: Fevers turn on the body's immune system. These fevers do not cause any discomfort.
- Fever medicine is only needed for fevers over 102° F (39° C). The goal of fever therapy is to keep the fever at a helpful level around 102 F (39 C).
- Give acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) or ibuprofen (such as Advil). See the Dose Tables. Note: ibuprofen is not approved under 6 months of age.
- Most often, the fever meds lower the fever by 2° to 3°F (1° - 1.5°C). They do not bring it down to normal. Also, it takes 1 to 2 hours to see the effect.
- Children should not take both acetaminophen and ibuprofen together. Reason: not needed and can cause side effects.
- Pain: Fever does not cause pain. If your child also has pain, it's from the infection. It may be a sore throat or muscle pain. Treat the pain, if it's more than mild.

## 3. **Treatment for All Fevers - Extra Fluids**

- Fluids alone can lower the fever. Reason: Being well hydrated helps the body give off heat through the skin.
- Offer your baby extra formula or breastmilk.
- Dress in 1 layer of clothing, unless shivering. Reason: helps heat loss from the skin.

## 4. **Sponging with Lukewarm Water: Do Not Use**

- Sponging is an option for high fevers above 104° F (40° C) that do not come down with fever meds.
- It is not recommended for infants.
- Talk with your doctor for fevers above 104° F (40° C)

## 5. **What to Expect**

- Most fevers with viral illnesses range between 101° and 104° F (38.4° and 40° C).
- They last for 2 or 3 days.
- Again, fevers at this level are not harmful.

## 6. **Return to Child Care**

- Your child can return after the fever is gone for 24 hours.

## **Call Your Doctor If**

- Age under 3 months
- Your child looks or acts very sick
- Any serious symptoms occur, such as trouble breathing
- Age 3-6 months and fever as only symptom lasts over 24 hours
- Fever as only symptom lasts over 48 hours
- Fever goes above 104° F (40° C)
- You think your child needs to be seen
- Your child becomes worse

## **Pediatric Care Advice**

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