

Fever in Children



Emergency Services

4480 Oak Street, Vancouver, BC V6H 3V4

604-875-2345 1-888-300-3088

www.bcchildrens.ca

Fever is a rise in body temperature. Fever is a normal and healthy reaction to an infection. Fever helps the body fight infection.

What is normal body temperature?

Normal body temperature is around 37°C (98.6°F). Our body temperature usually rises during the day to around 37.6°C (99.6°F) and falls at night to around 36.3°C (97.4°F).

Measuring body temperature

Children often feel warm to the touch when they have a fever. To confirm your child has a fever, use a thermometer to measure your child's body temperature.

Body temperature varies depending on how you take it. The most common ways are in the armpit and under the tongue.

When to use the armpit method

- For children who are 6 years old or younger
- For children who cannot hold a thermometer under their tongue

When to use the under the tongue method

- For children who are over 6 years old
- For children who can breathe easily through their nose

Using a digital thermometer

Armpit Method:

- Turn the thermometer on.
- Sit your child on your lap.
- Undress the arm furthest from you.
- Place the tip of the thermometer in the centre of the armpit.
- Hold the arm against your child's body.
- Remove the thermometer when you hear the beep – usually about 1 minute.
- Read the temperature.
- Clean the thermometer with cool, soapy water. Rinse well.

Under the Tongue Method:

- Turn the thermometer on.
- Place the tip of the thermometer under the tongue, to the back of the mouth, just to one side of centre.
- Ask your child to close his or her lips around the thermometer.
- Remove the thermometer when you hear the beep – usually about 1 minute.
- Read the temperature.
- Clean the thermometer with cool, soapy water. Rinse well.

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Never use a glass (mercury) thermometer.

How to care for a child with a fever

Keep your child cool but not cold.

- Dress your child in light clothing.
- Remove heavy sweaters and blankets.
- Keep the room temperature below 21°C (70°F).
- Place a cool cloth on your child's forehead.
- Use a fan in the summer to cool the room. Do not blow the cold air directly onto the child.
- If your child starts to shiver, cover your child. Shivering increases body temperature.

Keep your child hydrated.

- Encourage your child to drink clear fluids such as water, apple or cranberry juice, or ginger ale.
- If your child is breastfeeding, continue to breastfeed as well.
- Older children can also have clear gelatine desserts and popsicles.

Giving medicine for fever

Remember, a fever is the body's normal way to fight infection. You don't always need to bring a temperature right back to normal.

- <http://commons.wikimedia.org>
- <http://phil.cdc.gov/phil/quicksearch.asp>

If your child is 3 months old or younger and the body temperature is 38°C (100°F) or higher:

- Call your family doctor right away.
- **Do not** give any medicine until your doctor says so.

If your child is more than 3 months old and the body temperature is 38.5°C (101.3°F) or higher, you can give either of these medicines.

- acetaminophen (Tylenol, Tempra, drug store and other brands)
- ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, drug store and other brands)

Only use those medicines labelled specifically for infants and children.

The correct dose for your child is based on body weight.

Your child weighs: _____

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Never give a child Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid or ASA) or anything with ASA in it.

Go to the nearest Emergency Department if:

- The fever lasts for more than 48 hours.
- The fever goes to 40°C (104°F) or higher.
- Your child is not getting better.
- Your child is having trouble breathing.
- Your child has a seizure.
- Your child complains of a stiff, sore neck.

To learn more, it's good to ask:

- Your family doctor
- HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf and hard of hearing) or go online at www.HealthLinkBC.ca.

This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.