

Fact sheet No.4



Easy Read

Fever in Children



This fact sheet helps you to know what's 'normal' and what you can expect to happen if your child has a fever.

It also tells you when you should become concerned and see your doctor.

What is fever?

Fever is a raised body temperature of over 38°C.

It usually means your child has an infection which usually suggests an underlying **infection**.

An **infection** is a disease in part of your body.





A mild fever is a normal part of childhood.

It is a natural, healthy and harmless way that the body fights infection.



Fever is common

Most young children have at least one episode of fever every year.



Common causes

Common causes of fever include the common cold, ear infections, stomach bugs, and throat infections.



Serious causes

Severe infections, such as pneumonia or meningitis, could be the cause of the fever. They are rare.



Children under six months

Any child under six months of age with a fever should be seen by a health professional.

What may happen?



Fever gets better by itself

In most cases, fever is caused by a harmless illness that gets better by itself.



Your child won't need antibiotics.



Fever should not last for longer than five days.

What can I do to help my child?



Check your child's temperature

In young children use either an electronic or chemical dot thermometer in your child's arm pit,



or an infra-red tympanic thermometer in the ear.

If you haven't got a thermometer, judge for yourself whether your child feels unusually hot.



Clothing

Avoid over or under-dressing your feverish child.



Heating and cooling

Keep your central heating down.



We don't recommend sponging your child with cool water any more.



Drinks

Offer your child regular drinks.

If you're a breastfeeding mother, offer your child as many feeds as they will take.



Body checks

Check your child at night for signs of serious illness.



Schooling/nursery

It is best to keep feverish children away from nursery or school.



Medication

You can give either paracetamol or ibuprofen if your child is unwell.

Don't give them these medicines unless they are feeling unwell.



Do not give your child paracetamol and ibuprofen at the same time unless a health professional suggests it.

When should I seek medical help?



Rarely, more serious medical problems may cause fever in children.

Speak to your child's GP if your child's health gets worse or if you are worried about looking after your child at home.



Get medical help straight away if you notice any of these things:

High fever

A temperature over 38°C in children age 0-3 months or over 39°C in children age 3-6 months.



Vomiting

Your child vomits repeatedly, or brings up dark-green vomit.



Skin colour

Your child looks pale, **ashen**, mottled or blue.

Ashen means very pale or even grey

Mottled means pale with red blotches

Also get medical help if your child:



- Doesn't respond normally
- Has difficult waking up
- Is less active
- Doesn't smile
- Appears ill
- Cries in an unusual way.



Breathing

Your child breathes much faster than usual.

You notice unusual grunting.



Not drinking

- Your child doesn't eat or drink much and doesn't wee much.



- Nappies stay dry. Their mouth and eyes appear dry
- The soft spot at the top of the head in babies seems to be sunken or bulging.



The fever lasts a long time

Your child's fever has lasted for five or more days.



Rash

You notice a new rash that doesn't fade when you press it. Press a tumbler against the rash to see if it disappears.



Other signs

Your child can't walk for some reason and has developed a swelling or new lump in a limb or joint.



Your child has a stiff neck, cold limbs or has had a fit.

You notice any other unusual things that you can't explain.

Where can I find out more?



NHS Choices

Web: www.nhs.uk/Conditions/feverchildren/Pages/Introduction.aspx

Remember that your pharmacist can also help you.