

Fever

Over 37.5°C means a fever

If your child has a fever, he or she will have a body temperature above 37.5°C. Your child may also feel tired, look pale, have a poor appetite, be irritable, have a headache or other aches and pains and feel generally unwell. Take the temperature from the armpit (don't use in the mouth of under 5s). However, bear in mind that these measurements are less accurate as the armpit is slightly cooler.

A fever is part of the body's natural response to fight infection and can often be left to run its course provided your child is drinking enough and is otherwise well. If your child is having trouble drinking, trying to reduce their temperature may help with this. This is important in preventing your child from becoming dehydrated, which can lead to more serious problems. As a guide, your child's urine should be pale yellow - if it is darker, your child may need to drink more fluids.

Fevers are common in young children. They are usually caused by viral infections and clear up without treatment. However, a fever can occasionally be a sign of a more serious illness such as a urinary tract infection, pneumonia, meningitis or a severe bacterial infection of the blood (septicaemia).

You should also contact your GP if fever symptoms are not improving after 48 hours. Check your child during the night.

Always seek medical advice if your child develops a fever soon after an operation, or soon after travelling abroad.

GP says

When looking after a feverish child at home you should:

- Get the child to drink more (where a baby or child is breastfed the most appropriate fluid is breast milk).
- Look for signs of dehydration: reduced wet nappies, dry mouth, sunken eyes, no tears, poor overall appearance, sunken soft spot in babies.
- It is not advisable to give ibuprofen if your child is dehydrated.
- Know how to identify a nonblanching rash.
- Check child during the night.

Source: NICE, Feverish illness in children

Babies under six months

Always contact your GP, Health Visitor, Practice Nurse, Nurse Practitioner or local clinic GP if your baby has other signs of illness, as well as a raised temperature and/or if your baby's temperature is 37.5°C (99.5°F) or higher.

Older children

A little fever isn't usually a worry. Contact your GP if your child seems unusually ill, or has a high temperature which doesn't come down.

- It's important to encourage your child to drink as much fluid as possible. Water is best.
- Bringing a temperature down is important because a continuing high temperature can be very unpleasant and, in a small child, occasionally brings on a fit or convulsion.

To help reduce temperature:

- Undress to nappy/pants.
- Keep room at comfortable temp (18°C).
- Encourage your child to drink more (even little amounts often).
- Give paracetamol or ibuprofen in the correct recommended dose for your child.

1

My toddler is hot and grumpy.

2

Have you tried infant paracetamol? Have you made sure they are drinking lots of fluids?

3

If their temperature remains over 37.5°C and doesn't come down, contact your GP.

Source: DoH Birth to five edition 2009.