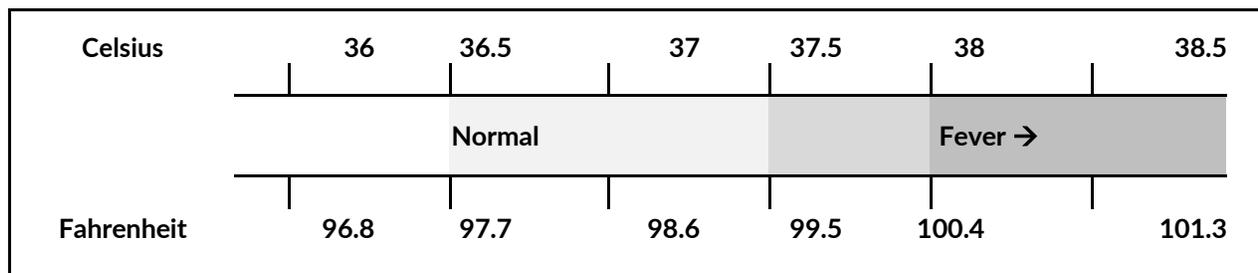


Caring for a child with a fever

What is a fever?

- Normal body temperature is around 37°C (98.6°F). A fever means that your child's body temperature is above normal.
- **A fever is generally a temperature over 38° C (100.4° F).** The number varies slightly, depending on whether the temperature was taken in the child's mouth, under the armpit or in his or her bottom.
- Fever is the body's way to fight an infection.
- Fever can make your child feel hot, uncomfortable, irritable or achy. Your child may be less active than usual.
- Some fevers can last for 2 to 3 days, even when treated with fever medication.



How do I take my child's temperature?

- There are three ways to take a child's temperature:
 - under the tongue (oral)
 - under the armpit (axillary)
 - in the bottom (rectal)

Ear and forehead thermometers may not be accurate and are not recommended.

The right way to take your child's temperature depends on your child's age. If you are not sure what to do, ask your nurse before you leave the Emergency Department.

Your child's temperature may go up after a hot drink, after a hot bath, in hot weather and when exercising. If you think these things are affecting your child's temperature, wait an hour and check it again.

Is what I've heard about fevers true?

Some things you may hear about fevers are myths. Here is the truth about children's fevers.

X Myth	✓ Truth
All fevers are bad.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fever is the body's way of fighting infection. • For most children over 3 months old, a fever is not usually harmful. A baby less than 3 months old should see a doctor right away.
Fevers cause brain damage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fevers caused by infections do not damage the brain. • A temperature over 42° C can cause brain damage. This could happen with heat stroke.
Anyone can have a febrile seizure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very few children (only 4%) have seizures that are triggered by a fever.
Febrile seizures are harmful.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A febrile seizure usually stops within 5 minutes and is not usually harmful.
All fevers must be treated with fever medication.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only fevers that cause discomfort need to be treated with medication to lower the fever. • Without treatment, a fever from infection will not continue to get higher. It will most likely stop at 39.4 to 40° C
Fevers must be treated with antibiotics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most fevers do not need to be treated with antibiotics. Antibiotics will not help an illness caused by a virus. • Antibiotics are only prescribed for certain infections.
Fever medication brings the temperature down to normal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever medication lowers the temperature by a degree or two. As it wears off, the temperature may go back up. • Most fevers are caused by viruses and can last up to 3 days. As the illness caused by the virus gets better, the temperature comes down and returns to normal.
"Feed a cold, starve a fever"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With a fever, give your child extra fluids to replace the fluids lost through sweating, and breathing faster than normal. • If your child is hungry, offer foods he or she likes.

What can I do to help my child?

Give your child plenty of fluids or breastfeed more often.

This replaces fluids lost from sweating. Popsicles and cold drinks are helpful, but your child can have any drinks that he or she likes, unless he or she has vomiting or diarrhea. If your child has vomiting or diarrhea, the doctor or nurse will give you other instructions.

Help your child to get comfortable.

A blanket may help if your child feels cold or has chills. If your child is hot and sweaty, he or she may need to take off some clothes.

Give medication to lower the fever.

Your child may have Acetaminophen (Tylenol® or Tempra®) or Ibuprofen (Advil® or Motrin®). Ask your pharmacist to help you choose the best product for your child. Follow the directions on the package carefully. The amount (dose) will depend on your child's age and weight.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol or Tempra) is also available in a suppository. This type of medication is put into your child's bottom (bum, rectum). It is a good way to treat a fever if your child feels sick or is throwing up.

When should I call the doctor?

Call your family doctor or pediatrician if you notice **ANY** of the following:

- Your baby (less than 3 months old) has:
 - a temperature over 37.5°C (99.5°F) taken under the armpit
 - a temperature over 38°C (100.4°F) taken in the bottom
- Your child (over 3 months old) has a temperature over 40°C (104°F)
- Your child looks or acts very sick – for example: very tired or weak, not drinking fluids or difficult to wake.
- Your child's fever lasts for more than 3 days.
- Your child has not had a wet diaper or passed urine in 12 hours.
- You are concerned about your child.

If you are not able to reach your family doctor or you feel your child is not getting better, take your child to the Emergency Department. If your child turns blue or stops breathing, call 911.