

What is a fever?

- A normal temperature in babies and children is about 36.4C, but this can vary slightly from child to child.
- A fever is a high temperature of 38C or more.
- Fever is the body's natural response to fighting infections like coughs and colds.
- Many things can cause a high temperature in children, from common childhood illnesses like chickenpox and tonsillitis, to vaccinations.

Checking a high temperature

Your child might:

- feel hotter than usual to the touch on their forehead, back or tummy
- feel sweaty or clammy
- have red cheeks
- Use a digital thermometer (which you can buy from pharmacies and supermarkets) to take your child's temperature.

What to do if your child has a high temperature

You can usually look after your child or baby at home. The temperature should go down over 3 or 4 days.

Do

- give them plenty of fluids
- look out for signs of dehydration
- give them food if they want it

- check on your child regularly during the night
- keep them at home
- give them paracetamol or ibuprofen if they're distressed or unwell

Don't

- undress your child or sponge them down to cool them – fever is a natural and healthy response to infection
- cover them up in too many clothes or bedclothes
- give aspirin to under 16s
- combine ibuprofen and paracetamol, unless your GP tells you to
- give paracetamol to a child under 2 months
- give ibuprofen to a child under 3 months or under 5kg
- give ibuprofen to children with asthma

Get an urgent GP appointment if your child:

- is under 3 months old and has a temperature of 38C or higher, or you think they have a fever
- is 3 to 6 months old and has a temperature of 39C or higher, or you think they have a fever
- has other signs of illness, such as a rash, as well as a high temperature
- has a high temperature that's lasted for more than 5 days
- doesn't want to eat, or isn't their usual self and you're worried
- has a high temperature that doesn't come down with paracetamol or ibuprofen
- is showing signs of dehydration – such as nappies that aren't very wet, sunken eyes, and no tears when they're crying

Call NHS 111 at evenings and weekends