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# What To Do When Your Child Has A Fever

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You wake up in the middle of the night to find your child flushed, hot and sweaty. Their forehead is warm to touch. You immediately think your child has a fever, but you are unsure of what to do next. Should you get out the thermometer or call the doctor? Most fevers are not serious.

## What is a Fever?

A Fever is not an illness -- it usually is a symptom of another problem. A fever occurs when the body's internal thermostat rises above its normal level. The normal temperature of most children is around 98.6° Fahrenheit (F) when taken by mouth. Several causes are:

- **Infection:** - fever helps the body fight infection
- **Overdressing:** - infants may get fevers if they have too much clothing on or are in a hot environment. Infants can't regulate their body temperature.
- **Immunizations:** - Babies and children sometimes get a fever after a vaccination.

## How to Take a Temperature

Take your child's temperature when they are well. Do this so you will know your child's normal temperature. A thermometer will tell you how high your child's fever is. Whichever type of thermometer you choose, be sure to know how to use it correctly.

**Digital Thermometers** - provide the quickest and most accurate readings. They can be used for taking temperature in the mouth, in the bottom and under the arm.

**Glass Mercury Thermometers** - the American Academy of Pediatrics does not recommend using this type of thermometer because of concerns about possible exposure to mercury.

The American Academy of Pediatrics does not recommend using the following thermometers in children younger than 3 months: Electronic Ear Thermometers, Pacifier Thermometers or Plastic Strip Thermometers.

**Is My Child's Temperature Too High:** Fever is an important part of the body's defense against infection. A normal range for any child at any age is 98.6° F (By mouth). Call your doctor right away:

- if your child is younger than three (3) months old and has a rectal temperature of 100.4°F or higher;
- if your child is 3-12 months old and has a fever of 102.2°F or higher;
- is under age two (2) has had a fever that last longer than 24-28 hours;
- is older and has a fever for longer than 48-72 hours;
- has a fever over 105°F and will not come down with treatment.

### **Call 911 if your child has a fever and:**

- is crying and cannot be calmed down;
- cannot be awakened easily or at all;
- seems confused;
- cannot walk;
- has a very bad headache; stiff neck; refuses to move an arm or leg