

ADOPTION HEALTH SERVICE
Rainbow Center for International ChildHealth

FEVER

Fever is a temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or more taken rectally or 100 degrees Fahrenheit or more taken orally. Fever is common in childhood and is often an early sign of illness. It is a manifestation of the body's natural mechanism of fighting against infections.

Taking a temperature?

- To take a temperature by mouth, place the thermometer tip under the tongue for approximately three minutes. You should not leave your child alone without supervision while taking the temperature. Do not give your child hot or cold liquids for at least 15 minutes before taking a temperature.
- To take a rectal temperature, you may use some petroleum jelly to lubricate the tip of the thermometer, then insert it gently into the rectum about half to one inch and hold it firmly in your hand for about two to three minutes. Do not leave your child alone with the thermometer.
- Temperature may also be taken in the armpit with an oral or rectal thermometer.

Types of thermometers

There are many different kinds of thermometers available:

- **Oral thermometer:** To be used in children usually over 5 years of age. Temperature recorded by an oral thermometer is usually a degree lower than that recorded by a rectal thermometer.
- **Rectal thermometer:** Measures the core temperature and is ideal in infants and young children.
- **Tympanic thermometer:** A tympanic or ear thermometer reading is not always reliable; it should not be used in infants below six months.
- **Forehead thermometer strips:** Not recommended for use.

How does one treat a fever?

Fever is one of the most common complaints of childhood. Fever can often be treated satisfactorily at home. It is more important to observe a child's general appearance and mental state than get alarmed by the height of temperature.

For very young infants less than 3 months of age, you should consult a physician right away. For older children you may use fever reducing medications if the temperature is 102.0 F or above to make your child comfortable.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol) and/or Ibuprofen (Motrin) are preferred. They are available as infant drops or elixir. Never give your child Aspirin. Aspirin given to children with certain viral infections has been known to cause Reye's syndrome, a very dangerous and life threatening condition. It is important to give the correct dose of Tylenol. Overdosing with Tylenol can cause severe liver problems.

- If you want to give a sponge bath to your child you may use lukewarm water but never use alcohol in bath water.
- If shivering occurs, a child may be losing more heat in the process so stop cooling treatments and try to keep the child dry and warm.
- Give more fluids.
- Keep your child in a cool room and dress him/ her in light clothing.

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What are the things one should watch for?

Seek medical attention at any time you are not comfortable with your child's condition.

You should seek medical attention immediately if your child is younger than three months, is crying persistently and cannot be consoled, is lethargic and difficult to arouse, complains of pain or stiffness in the neck, does not eat or drink, develops purple blotches on the skin, has difficulty breathing, has a change in cry or has prolonged fever more than 2 days or develops any other significant problems.