

# Fever: looking after your child at home

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**We think that your child is now well enough to go home. This leaflet aims help you care for your child at home if he/she has a fever. Please feel free to discuss any further queries or concerns with the hospital staff.**

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**A fever is a high temperature of 38C or more.**

If your child has a fever, you will need to:

## **Prevent dehydration**

Offer your child regular drinks of water or over the counter rehydration drinks (if your child is still being breastfed, offer them breastmilk). Look out for signs of dehydration, such as:

- Sunken fontanelle (the soft spot on a baby's head).
- A dry mouth.
- Sunken eyes.
- No tears.
- Reduction in wet nappies, or reduced visits to toilet to pass urine.

If you suspect your child is dehydrated, encourage them to drink more fluids and **seek further advice as guided at the end of this leaflet.**

## **Adjust clothing**

Children with a fever should not be over- or under-dressed. Keep your child cool by keeping the room cool and leave them covered with only light clothing, such as a vest and pants / nappy. **Do not 'sponge' your child with water. This does not help to reduce fever.**

## **Consider medicines to reduce temperature**

It should not be necessary to use medicines to treat your child's temperature. However, if your child has a fever and is distressed, you can help them feel more comfortable by giving them either Paracetamol (Calpol) **or** Ibuprofen (**follow the instructions on the packaging**) – don't give them both at the same time. If your child has not improved after 1-2 hours, try the other medicine to see if that helps reduce their symptoms. **Do NOT exceed doses advised on the bottle.**

## **Check them regularly at night**

Check your child during the night for rashes and to see if they are getting better.

## **Look for rashes**

If a rash appears, do the tumbler test (see overleaf). If you are concerned that your child is not improving, **seek further advice as guided at the end of this leaflet.**

## The tumbler test

If your child has a rash:

- Press a glass tumbler firmly against the rash.
- If you can see the spots through the glass and they do not fade, this is called a 'non-blanching rash'.
- If the rash does not fade, **seek medical advice immediately** (dial 999 or take your child to the Emergency Department – A&E).
- The rash may be harder to see on dark skin so check paler areas such as palms of the hand, soles of the feet, tummy and inside of eyelids.



*(Photo courtesy of the Meningitis Research Foundation)*

If you are concerned about your child or their condition worsens take the action stated below.

### Get an urgent GP appointment or call 111 if your child:

- Is under 3 months old and has a temperature of 38C or higher, or you think they have a fever.
- Is 3-6 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 has 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 go 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 999 or go to A&E if your child has:

- Pale/mottled/ashen/blue skin, lips or tongue.
- Stiff neck.
- Non blanching rash.
- Is bothered by light.
- No response to you.
- Does not wake, or if you wake them, does not stay awake.
- Weak, high-pitched or continuous cry.
- Grunting noises when breathing.
- In-drawing of the muscles between the ribs when breathing (this is particularly true in babies).
- Reduced skin turgor (when you very gently pinch the skin on the back of the hand between your fingers, it does not bounce back but keeps the pinched shape).
- Bulging fontanelle ('soft spot' on the top of the head of babies up to about 18 months of age).
- Sunken fontanelle – suggests lack of fluid in the body (dehydration).

## More information

<https://patient.info/health/fever-in-children-high-temperature>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/fever-in-children/>

NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

*Information in this leaflet is based upon National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance, 2018*

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**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

Paediatric Unit, August 2021.

Next review due: August 2023