

What to do if your child is feverish

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What is a fever

A fever is when your child has a temperature above 38°C. This is a sign that your child may have an infection. These are very common and are frequently caused by viruses. They may be ear infections, sore throats, coughs or vomiting and diarrhoea. Occasionally the temperature can be caused by bacteria which can be treated with antibiotics.

To check your child's temperature, make sure you have an appropriate thermometer for their age. Below 6 months an underarm thermometer and above 6 months an ear or tympanic thermometer should be used.

If your child looks well but has a fever it is possible to try and treat them yourself. If they do not, it may be worth seeking medical advice.

What you can do to help

It is important to keep giving your child fluids or breast milk if they are breast fed.

Paracetamol and ibuprofen should be given as this can reduce the temperature and make your child feel better. Make sure you check the correct dose for your child and the number of times appropriate to give the dose in 24 hours. This should be on the bottle. Both can be given together, however, it may be appropriate to try one and if things are not improving, the other can be given an hour later.

It is important not to under or overdress your child. Their normal level of clothing should be fine. Aim to keep the room temperature at about 18°C.

Call emergency 999, if your child is:

- Under 3 months old and has a temperature of 38°C or above
- Very pale, grey or blue
- Lifeless, unconscious, slow to wake or having difficulty staying awake
- Making a continuous weak or high-pitched cry
- Breathing fast, more than 60 breaths a minute, with signs of distress

- Showing a non-blanching rash, ie a rash that won't disappear when pressure is applied by, for instance, rolling a glass over the skin
- Fitting
- Producing black or bloody vomit

Speak to a health professional such as your GP, out of hours GP or NHS111, if your child is:

- 3 to 6 months old and has a temperature of 38°C or above
- Over 6 months old and has a fever while also looking unwell as follows:
 - They don't respond normally when you try and talk to them, or won't wake up easily
 - Their breathing rate is above 50 breaths per minute (less than 12 months) or above 40 breaths per minute (older than 12 months)
 - Their breathing becomes noisy or they can't talk in full sentences
 - They have one wet nappy or pass urine once in 12 hours Their mouth and eyes appear dry
 - Their temperature is above 39°C after taking paracetamol or ibuprofen
 - They have uncontrollable shaking also known as rigors
 - They develop a swollen red joint, arm, leg or refuse to walk
 - Babies are feeding poorly i.e. less than half their usual amount of milk
 - The fever has persisted for more than 5 days
 - You have concerns (even if you have seen your doctor that day) or your child is worsening.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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