

PARENTAL
INFORMATION

Fever



Fever

The average body temperature of a child measured rectally is about 37 degrees Celsius. The body temperature is never constant. Depending on the time of day, it can vary by up to 2 degrees Celsius (from 36-38 °C). It is lowest early in the morning and highest in the evening.

We speak of fever if the body temperature in infants under 3 months exceeds 38 °C and 38.5 °C with older children.

There are various causes of fever. Infections caused by viruses are the most frequent cause of fever in childhood. Viral infections cannot be treated with antibiotics, because these do not act against viruses. Sometimes fever is also caused by bacterial infections. Bacterial infections can be specifically treated with antibiotics. Allergic reactions, vaccinations, chronic illnesses and other rare causes can infrequently lead to fever.

Fever is not an illness, it is a sign of the body's active immune defence. Fever is not dangerous, and the extent of fever has no connection with the severity of the existing illness. The body temperature normalises as soon as the infection has been overcome.

How do you measure your child's temperature?

- With infants under 12 months we recommend measuring the temperature rectally.
- With children over 1 year the temperature can be measured under the armpit, in the mouth under the tongue or also in the ear by means of an ear thermometer. If you have never measured fever, ask the Mütterberatung (parental advisory service), your doctor or pharmacist for instructions.

Infants under 3 months who have fever above 38 °C must be immediately brought to a doctor.

The fever can rise slowly but also very rapidly. A febrile infection can infrequently lead to a febrile convulsion. Febrile convulsions are rare, occur between 6 months and 5 years and do not have any long-term effects (compare parental fact sheet on febrile convulsions).

When should you consult your doctor?

High fever can lead to impairment of your child's general state of health. If your child's general state of health is impaired (weak, tired, irritable, difficulty drinking) due to a high fever...

- ...undress your child and clothe or cover it only lightly
- High fever can lead to fluid loss; therefore frequently give small amounts of fluid such as water or tea
- Give the child paracetamol in the form of suppositories or syrup for a maximum of every 6 hours per day in the dose calculated correctly for the age, in accordance with the package information leaflet
- Observe the course: the fever should subside and the child's general state of health should improve. Contact your doctor if this does not occur.
- Do not give paracetamol longer than every 6 hours longer than 2 days without consulting a doctor

You should consult your doctor if your child has fever with the following symptoms:

- Your child is less than 3 months old and has fever $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$
- Your child complains about headaches, has a stiff neck and is sensitive to light
- Your child vomits constantly and refuses intake of fluids
- Your child has difficulty in breathing
- Your child becomes increasingly apathetic, lethargic
- Your child does not improve despite regular administration of paracetamol
- Your child has fever longer than 2 days and you administer paracetamol every 6 hours
- Your child has a febrile convulsion
- Your child has a rash on their body with fleabite-like, non-elevated red dots/spots that cannot be pressed away

Petechiae



In summary:

- Children frequently have fever. Viral infections are the most frequent cause.
- Infants under 3 months with fever $\geq 38^{\circ}\text{C}$ should be immediately brought to a doctor.
- Fever is neither harmful nor dangerous, but the sign that body is defending itself against infection. Solely the child's condition, not the extent of fever, is important.
- If your child is in a good general state of health (still likes to play, appears satisfied) you do not necessarily have to reduce the fever. In the event of impairment of the general state of health due to fever you can administer paracetamol in the form of suppositories or syrup for a maximum of every 6 hours, give sufficient fluid, wait patiently and observe the course.
- At any rate, in the event of fever and the abovementioned symptoms, or if you feel uncertain and are very worried about your child you should contact a doctor.