Fever in children

A parent and carer guide



Watch how your child looks, breathes, drinks and responds - not only the thermometer reading.

Comfort and fluids

- Measure temperature with a digital thermometer, following its instructions. Offer frequent fluids and continue breastfeeding. Check regularly, including overnight.
- Use comfortable clothing. Do not use cold baths or sponging, and do not wrap the child in too many layers.
- If distressed, a suitable paracetamol or ibuprofen product may help. Follow the exact age, weight and concentration instructions. Do not alternate them unless a clinician advises it. Never give aspirin under age 16.

When medicine needs extra care

- Do not give ibuprofen to a dehydrated child or a child with chickenpox. Check suitability in asthma. Young babies need age-specific advice; do not simply use an older child's medicine dose.

Seek prompt medical assessment

- A baby under 3 months with a temperature of 38 C or higher needs urgent assessment. At 3 to 6 months, 39 C or higher also needs urgent advice.
- Seek help for poor feeding, fewer wet nappies, persistent vomiting, unusual behaviour, worsening illness or fever lasting 5 days. Get help sooner if you are worried.

Emergency: call 112

Seek emergency help for difficulty breathing, blue or grey colour, a child who is hard to wake, a first seizure, a stiff neck or a rash that does not fade with pressure. Do not wait for a rash or every warning sign to appear.

My child's care record

Fever in children

Use the supplied medicine syringe, not a kitchen spoon.

Write down each dose and time to prevent another carer giving the same dose twice.

Child's name / date of birth

Weight and date measured

Symptoms started / temperatures recorded

Medicine name AND concentration

Dose and timing confirmed by clinician / pharmacist

Review appointment or when to seek help

Questions or notes for my appointment

Sources and further reading

NHS: fever in children
https://www.nhs.uk/symptoms/fever-in-children/

NHS: urgent help for babies and children under 5
https://www.nhs.uk/baby/health/when-to-get-urgent-medical-help-for-babies-and-children-under-5/

NHS: paracetamol for children
https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/paracetamol-for-children/

General information. Follow your individual clinical plan. Sources checked 31 October 2026; review due October 2027.