

## Patient Information



Kingston Hospital  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Fever (high temperature) in children

<https://kingstonhospital.nhs.uk/information/fever-high-temperature-in-children>

This is for anyone looking after a baby or child with a fever.

### What is a fever?

A fever is a body temperature above 38 degrees C. It is usually the body's way to fight infection. For example viral infections (which do not respond to antibiotics) can often make a child's temperature become high.

A fever can also be caused by other things, such as immunisation or as part of an inflammatory reaction caused by some medical conditions.

The height of a temperature does not usually help to decide how unwell a child is (except in babies under 6 months old).

### When can I treat my child's fever with medication?

If your child has a high temperature and appears well, you may not need to give them medication. This is because a fever is their body's response to help fight the infection.

However, if your child is upset or distressed, you can give paracetamol (for example Calpol) or ibuprofen (for example Nurofen). This will help to bring their temperature down. These medicines will not treat the cause of the fever but they will help your child feel better.

Paracetamol and ibuprofen are safe to give together, but you may find it more effective to alternate them. Do not exceed the recommended dose. Read the instructions on the medication packet carefully.

### What are the physical signs of a fever?



Your child might experience one or more of the following:

- feel hotter than usual to the touch on their forehead, back or tummy
- feel sweaty, clammy or have red cheeks.





KINGSTON HOSPITAL PAEDIATRICS:  
FROM BIRTH - 18 YEARS

## How can I measure my child's temperature?

 <p><b>We do advise</b></p>	 <p><b>We do not advise</b></p>
<p><b>For babies and young children:</b> Do use a digital thermometer under their arm. These can be bought from a pharmacy or supermarket.</p>	<p><b>For babies and young children:</b> Do not use forehead scanning thermometers, which are less reliable.</p> <p>Do not use in-ear (tympanic) thermometers which are difficult to use on children under 6 months of age because their ear canals are so small.</p>
<p><b>For older children:</b> Do use a digital thermometer placed under their arm or tongue, or a tympanic (in-ear) thermometer.</p>	<p><b>For older children:</b> Do not use rectal thermometers (which go inside the bottom/anus).</p> <p>Do not use old-style mercury thermometers.</p>

## What can I do if my child has a fever?

<p><b>Do</b></p> 	<p><b>Do not</b></p> 
<p>Keep them away from nursery or school.</p> <p>Monitor them carefully at home and seek advice from your GP if you are worried.</p> <p>Give them plenty of fluids to drink.</p> <p>Look for signs of dehydration such as passing less urine than normal, complaining of thirst, or dark, sunken eyes.</p> <p>Give them food if they are hungry.</p> <p>Check on them overnight.</p> <p>Give them paracetamol or ibuprofen if they are distressed or unwell. Always follow the instructions on the packet and never exceed the dose recommended for a child of their age.</p>	<p>Undress them or sponge them down to cool them. This may cause them to shiver and make the fever worse.</p> <p>Cover them up in too many clothes or bedclothes because they may overheat.</p> <p>Give aspirin to children aged under 16 years of age.</p> <p>Exceed the recommended doses for paracetamol or ibuprofen (read the medicine packaging carefully).</p> <p>Give ibuprofen to children with asthma, unless they have taken it before and experienced no adverse reaction.</p>

## When to get help

### Make a GP appointment or call 111 if your child:

- is under 3 months of age and has a temperature above 38 degrees C, or they feel hot to touch
- is 3-6 months of age and has a temperature above 39 degrees C, or they feel hot to touch
- 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
- has a high temperature that does not come down with paracetamol or ibuprofen
- is showing signs of dehydration such as passing less urine than normal, complaining of thirst, or has dark, sunken eyes.


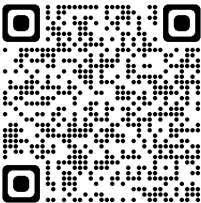
➔ Make an urgent GP appointment or call 111 if your child develops any of the conditions listed above.

### Get urgent help if your child:

- has a fever that continues after you have followed the advice on this sheet
- has a stiff neck
- has a rash that does not fade when you press a glass firmly against it
- is bothered by light
- has a fit (seizure) for the first time (call 999 if they are still shaking after five minutes)
- has unusually cold hands and feet
- has pale, blotchy, blue or grey skin
- has a weak or high-pitched cry (different to their normal cry)
- is sleepy and hard to wake up, or finds it hard to stay awake
- finds it hard to breathe and sucks their stomach in under their ribs
- your baby has a soft spot on their head that curves outwards (know as the fontanelle).

➔ Call 999 or go to your nearest Emergency Department (A&E) if you notice one or more of the conditions listed above.

## More information


 <p>NHS information on fever in children <a href="https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/fever-in-children/">www.nhs.uk/conditions/fever-in-children/</a></p>	
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Images by Freepik artists including pch.vectoron and juicy\_fish

## Contacts

Your GP

Paediatric Emergency Department (part of your nearest A&E)

<p><b>Translate</b></p>	<p>Please speak to a member of staff before or during your visit to the hospital if you require translation.</p>
<p><b>Accessibility</b></p>	<p>Please contact the Patient Experience Team on 020 8934 3850 if you need this information in a different format. For information accessibility please visit Kingston Hospital AccessAble <a href="http://www.accessable.co.uk/kingston-hospital-nhs-foundation-trust">www.accessable.co.uk/kingston-hospital-nhs-foundation-trust</a></p>
<p><b>Support services</b></p> <p>Visit the hospital website, ask a member of staff, or ring us for details.</p> <p><a href="http://www.kingstonhospital.nhs.uk">www.kingstonhospital.nhs.uk</a></p> <p>Switchboard 020 8546 7711</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Find Us' page for maps, transport, registering a blue badge, disabled access</li> <li>• Information, advice and support for patients and relatives (PALS) 020 8934 3993</li> <li>• Pastoral and Spiritual Support 020 8546 7711</li> <li>• Learning Disability Liaison Team 020 8934 6895</li> </ul>