

WHAT IS FEVER?

A fever is usually defined as a body **temperature over 38 °C**. It's your body's way of fighting an infection, so fever itself isn't dangerous, and in most cases, is actually good^{1,2}.

TWO MAIN TYPES

1.

MILD

Temperature reading of **38 - 39 °C**^{3,4}.

No need to treat if there are no other symptoms^{1,3}.

Babies under 3 months: see a doctor ASAP if temperature reaches 38 °C³.

Babies aged 3-6 months: see a doctor ASAP if temperature reaches 39 °C³.

Children of any age who seem pale, dehydrated, unresponsive, or are having a seizure should see a doctor without delay³.

2.

HIGH

Temperature reading **above 40 °C**^{5,6}.

This could indicate a serious illness in a child^{5,6}.

Seek medical advice and use medication to relieve discomfort^{5,6}.



SIGNS OF FEVER



ADULTS⁷

Feeling warm

Shivering or chills

Body aches

Sleepy

Difficulty breathing

Thirsty

Weakness

Poor appetite



CHILDREN²

Fatigue

Joint pain

Muscle aches

Loss of appetite

Confusion

Rapid pulse

Rapid breathing

Hot to the touch⁸

Constantly irritable or inconsolable⁸

How the child *looks* is more important than the thermometer reading⁹

COMPLICATIONS IN CHILDREN



SYMPTOMS

Passing out⁸

Difficulty breathing⁸

Looking pale or turning blue⁸

Foaming at the mouth⁸

Eyes rolling back⁸

Fixed gaze⁸

Twitching or jerking⁸

The child is confused or irritable for about 30 minutes afterwards⁸

Check that your child can breathe and is breathing, and has a pulse. Note symptoms and duration so you can tell your healthcare provider^{6,8}

FEBRILE SEIZURES

Triggered by a fever in some children aged between **6 months and 6 years**⁹.

Last no more than a few minutes and aren't serious.



CAUSES

Almost always the result of an infection¹

Other causes may include serious illnesses such as pneumonia, meningitis, septicaemia or vaccination^{4,9}

TREATMENT

Do not treat a mild fever³.

Only treat when fever gets high enough to cause discomfort. This helps ease the symptoms but won't get rid of the underlying cause⁷.

Fluids, rest, and wearing light clothing are important^{7,11}.

Over-the-counter medicines containing paracetamol or ibuprofen can reduce fever^{9,10}.

PREVENTION

Washing your hands with soap and water helps limit exposure to germs that cause infection¹¹.

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3 De Ronne, N. La fièvre chez les enfants de moins de 3 ans [Management of fever in children younger than 3 years]. *J Pharm Belg*. Sep, 353-7. French. (2010)

4 Barffaj, T. & Conti, B. Fever. *Scientific World Journal*. 16,10.490-503. (2010)

5 Schmitt, B.D. Fever phobia: misconceptions of parents about fevers. *Am J Dis Child*. 134, 2176-181. (1980)

6 Smith, D. K., et al. Febrile Seizures: Risks, Evaluation, and Prognosis. *Am Fam Physician*. 99, 7. 445-450. (2019)

7 Hague, R. Managing the child with a fever. *The Practitioner*. 259, 1784. 17-3. (2015)

8 Laino, D., et al. Management of Pediatric Febrile Seizures. *Int J Environ Res Publ Health*. 15, 10. 2232. (2018)

9 El-Radhi, A.S. Fever management: Evidence vs current practice. *World J. Clin. Pediatr*. 1, 4. 29-33. (2012).

10 Katrin, S. Fever after Immunization: Current Concepts and Improved Future Scientific Understanding. *Clin. Infect. Dis*. 39, 3. 389-394. (2004)

11 Burton, M. The effect of handwashing with water or soap on bacterial contamination of hands. *J. Environ. Res. Public Health*. 8, 1. 97-104. (2011).

Suspect you have a high fever?

Contact your healthcare provider as soon as possible.

Find out more at www.knowpain.co.za

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