

Facts about Fever in Children

Fever is the body's normal response to infection. If your child has a high fever but is playful and cheerful, there is little need to worry. Even minor illnesses in children may cause a high fever (up to 104°F, or 40°C). Fever, by itself, is usually NOT harmful. Fever does NOT cause brain damage.

■ Fever is present if your child's:

- **Oral** (by mouth) temperature is over 100°F (37.8°C).
- **Rectal** (by bottom) temperature is over 100.4°F (38°C).
- **Axillary** (under the arm) temperature is over 99°F (37.2°C).

■ Treatment of Fever at Home

- **Clothing** —Dress your child lightly to allow body heat to escape.
- **Fluids** —Give plenty of fluids.
- **Medicine** —Give your child either Tylenol®, Tempra®, Panadol®, or some other acetaminophen product.
Do NOT use aspirin unless told to do so by your doctor (aspirin may cause other problems).
- **Sponging** —Some doctors advise sponging the child with mildly warm water for 20 to 30 minutes. (**Caution:** Do NOT sponge the child with cold water, ice water, or rubbing alcohol.)

Contact the doctor if:

- Fever is present in an infant under 3 months of age.
- Your child's fever lasts more than a few days.
- Your child still lacks energy after a few days, is always sleepy, or is cranky.
- Your child refuses to drink.
- Your child's pain (ear, stomach, throat, neck, back, or joint pain) does not go away.

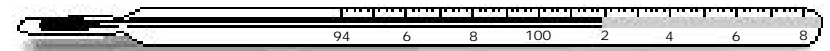
How to Take Your Child's Temperature

Getting Ready

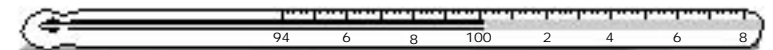
- Hold the thermometer at the end **opposite** from the silver-colored bulb.
- Shake thermometer with a downward motion. Do this until the silver-colored line running through the thermometer falls below 96°F (35°C).

Reading the Thermometer

There are two types of thermometers—**oral** and **rectal**—but both are read the same. When reading the thermometer, look for the silver-colored line that runs through the center. It is from this line (which might be hard to find at first) that you will read your child's temperature. Each of the little black lines represents 0.2 degree. Each of the longer black lines represents 1 degree. Example:



- **Oral Thermometer** (slim and long bulb) Read this: ↑
"one hundred and two" (102°F)



- **Rectal Thermometer** (round and short bulb) Read this: ↑
"one hundred point two" (100.2°F)

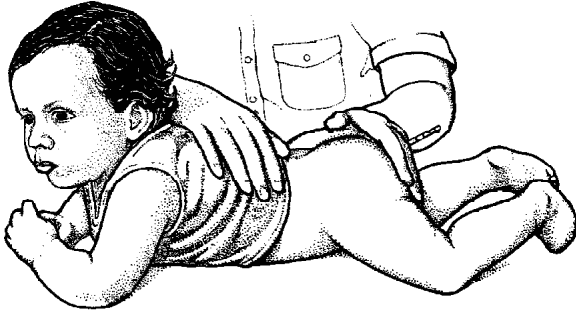
- Plastic fever strips—which change color when placed on the forehead—are not accurate and should NOT be used.

(Continued: Facts about Fever in Children)

Taking the Temperature

■ By Bottom (Rectal)

- Cover the silver-colored bulb of a rectal thermometer with petroleum jelly (such as Vaseline®).
- Gently insert thermometer into child's rectum, no further than 1 inch (2½ cm).
- Hold thermometer in place for 2 to 3 minutes.

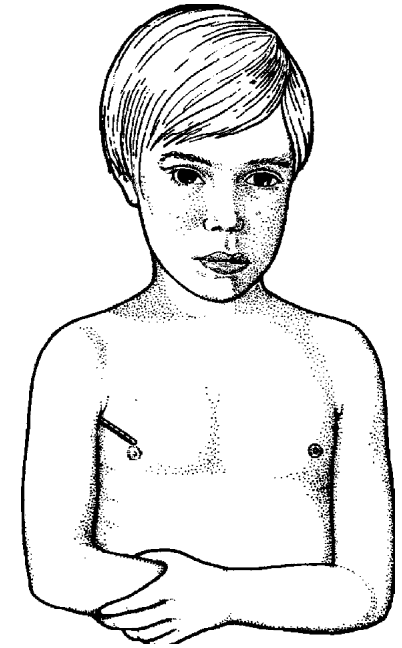


■ By Mouth (Oral)

- Do NOT give the child cold or hot liquids for ½ hour before taking an oral temperature.
- Place the bulb end of an oral thermometer under the child's tongue.
- Tell child to close his or her mouth but NOT to bite the thermometer.
- Leave thermometer in place for 2 minutes.

■ By Ampit (Axillary)

- Make sure the armpit is dry.
- Place the bulb end of either a **rectal** or **oral** thermometer under the child's arm. Make sure the arm is held tightly against the body.
- Wait 3 to 4 minutes before removing thermometer.



For More Information

Please see the *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*, pages 163-166. You can also call the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone message #127. To reach Healthphone, call 1-800-33-ASK ME (1-800-332-7563).

Temperature can be measured in either
°F (degrees Fahrenheit) or °C (degrees Centigrade).

Stay with your child while taking his or her temperature.

Kaiser Permanente does not endorse any brand names; any similar products may be used.

The information presented here is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of professional medical care. If your child has persistent health problems or if you have further questions, please consult your health care provider.

©1994 Kaiser Permanente. All rights reserved.
SCPMG Regional Health Education and Health Promotion
MH-0122-EI (5/98)