



Source CIUSSS MCQ

# Fever in babies

Fever is the body's defence mechanism against infections, which are often viral and sometimes bacterial.

Fever is very common during childhood; it is a symptom, not a disease. A high fever does not necessarily mean that one is very sick.

## Temperature check

Avoid using mercury thermometers, because they can break and be dangerous.

Taking the temperature rectally (rectum) is much more reliable and accurate than taking it orally (mouth), axillary (armpit) or tympanic (in the ears with a thermometer made for this purpose).

Remember to wash the thermometer tip in cold, soapy water and rinse well after each use. For tympanic (ear) thermometers, use a clean, single-use tip (probe cover) each time you use it.

Age	Recommended sites
0 to 2 years	1 <sup>st</sup> choice: rectum 2 <sup>nd</sup> choice: armpit
2 to 5 years	1 <sup>st</sup> choice: rectum 2 <sup>nd</sup> choice: ear, armpit
More than 5 years	1 <sup>st</sup> choice: rectum, mouth, 2 <sup>nd</sup> choice: ear, armpit

## Possible symptoms associated with fever

- Chills
- Feeling of cold

- Headache
- Skin is warm to the touch
- Less energetic
- Fatigue or irritability
- Splotchy skin

Your child has a fever if his or her temperature is equal to or higher than:	
Rectal (rectum)	38.5 °C or 101.3 °F (38 °C or 100.4 °F for infant less than 3 months old)
Oral (mouth)	38.0 °C or 100.4 °F
Axilla (armpit)	37.5 °C or 99.0 °F
Tympanic (ear)	38.0 °C or 100.4 °F

## Tips

- Give your child plenty of fluids to drink to avoid dehydration.
- Encourage your child to rest.
- Maintain a room temperature around 20 °C.
- Dress your child lightly so that body heat can dissipate. If your child is shivering, add a light blanket.
- Avoid baths (cold or lukewarm), alcohol rubs and fans. These treatments are not effective and can be stressful for your child.

## Medication

Use acetaminophen or ibuprofen to reduce fever. You can give acetaminophen to your child if he or she is older than 3 months. Follow the dosage, amount and dosing interval recommended on the

product label, based on your child's weight. If you are unsure, consult your pharmacist or dial 811 for Info-Santé.

Avoid giving ibuprofen to your child if he or she is less than 6 months old or unable to hydrate.

Never give acetylsalicylic acid or ASA to a child or teenager.

### When to consult?

- If your child shows signs of dehydration, such as a lack of tears, a dry mouth, or a decrease in the amount of urine (less than 4 in 24 hours).

- If the fever lasts more than 72 hours.
- If your child's general condition is worsening or if you are concerned.

### When to go to the ER **URGENTLY?**

- If your child has a febrile seizure, seek help quickly.
- If your child is less than 3 months old and has a fever over 38 °C rectal (100.4 °F).
- If your child is very sleepy and you have trouble waking him or her up.
- If your child has trouble breathing: wheezing, rapid breathing, irregular breathing or a cough that lasts longer than normal.
- If your child shows abnormal redness or redness that doesn't turn white with pressure.



### For more information

- [Explanatory sheets and videos: ciusssmcq.ca/conseils-sante/vous-etes-malade/](https://ciusssmcq.ca/conseils-sante/vous-etes-malade/)
- [INSPQ: fever](#)
- [Fever: sheet from the Centre hospitalier universitaire Sainte-Justine](#)

### Contact information for medical clinics

- [CIUSSS MCQ website: facility contact information](#)

### Where to consult

- Your pharmacist
- Info-Santé 811 available at all times: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Your family doctor at your FMG or medical clinic
- If you do not have a physician: 1-844-313-2029, option 1. From 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Monday to Friday and from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Saturdays, Sundays and holidays
- Walk-in clinics
- Your nearest emergency room (See above *information When to go to the ER URGENTLY?*)

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