



East Suffolk and
North Essex
NHS Foundation Trust

Fever in children

***Children's Ward
Colchester Hospital
Tel: 01206 746208 or 746209***

***Children's Assessment Unit
Colchester Hospital
Tel: 01206 746200***

***Children's Elective Care Unit
Colchester Hospital
Tel: 01206 744237***

***Children's Emergency Unit
Colchester Hospital
Tel: 01206 742847***



Introduction

A fever is an increase in your child's body temperature. Fever in children is common, although it can cause anxiety for parents and carers.

Children can produce a high temperature very easily. They also change very fast and symptoms and signs can be very non-specific. A fever will help your child fight infection. Fever itself does not cause damage to the brain, neither will it increase relentlessly, as the level is well controlled by the central nervous system.

Almost all children with fever recover quickly and without problems. In a very small proportion of children, the fever may not improve or your child's health may worsen, which can sometimes be a sign of a serious illness or infection.

Measuring your child's fever

The height of temperature or the length of time your child has a fever may not be useful when working out how ill your child is. However, this may be different for very young babies.

Your child's temperature will be measured using a thermometer placed under his or her arm. Your child will also have his or her pulse (heart rate) and breathing (respiratory rate), measured. The doctor and nurses will also check for signs of dehydration. Your child may also need to provide a urine sample, because a urinary tract infection is a common cause of fever in children.

Sometimes the doctor will not find a reason for your child's fever, even after a full examination. Antibiotics will not normally be prescribed for children with fever if the cause is not known.



The doctor will decide how best to care for your child, based on the examination.

Caring for your child with fever

Most children with fever can be cared for at home. There are medicines (known as antipyretics) that are commonly used to reduce fever.

Paracetamol and ibuprofen are antipyretics. These medicines can help to lower your child's temperature and make your child feel more comfortable but they do not treat the cause of the fever. These medicines should not be given at the same time but if you give your child one medicine and it does not help, you may wish to consider using the other. You should always check the instructions on the bottle or packet, or speak to your doctor or nurse if you need more information.

If your child is not distressed or uncomfortable with their fever it may be better not to try to reduce it. A fever is the body's way of fighting infection, so reducing it may interfere with this process.

Caring for your child in hospital

Your child may have his or her blood and urine tested while he or she is in hospital. Sometimes the doctor will recommend a chest X-ray. The doctor may want to carry out some additional tests or keep your child in hospital for a few hours to see if their symptoms get better or worse. The doctor will explain these tests and the reasons for doing them.

If your child is very unwell or younger than three months, the doctor may prescribe your child antibiotics while they carry out further tests.

When your child is well enough to go home

Remember

- Offer your child regular drinks (if you are breastfeeding, breast milk is best).
- Look for signs that your child may be dehydrated (dry mouth, no tears, sunken eyes, sunken fontanelle – the soft spot on a baby's head).
- Encourage your child to drink more fluids if they are dehydrated and seek further advice if you are worried.
- How to look for and identify a non-blanching rash (a rash that does not disappear with pressure).
- Check on your child during the night.
- Keep your child away from school or nursery while he or she has a fever.



- Some people use a fan to cool a child. Again, this may not be a good idea if the fanned air is too cold. However, a gentle flow of air in a room which is normal room temperature may be helpful. Consider just opening a window or using a fan on the other side of the room to keep the air circulating.

Do not over or under dress your child. Do not sponge your child with water as this does not help to reduce fever.

Seeking further advice

If you are concerned about your child's fever, please ask the nurse caring for your child or the doctor.

You should seek further advice from your GP or NHS 111 if:

- your child develops a non-blanching rash
- your child has a fit
- your child's health gets worse
- the fever lasts more than five days
- you are worried
- you have concerns about looking after your child at home.

More information

The organisations below may be able to provide more information and support:

NICE

www.nice.org/feverishillnessinchildren

NHS 111 (phone 111)

A good starting point for finding out more information online is: <https://111.nhs.uk/>

Useful phone numbers

Colchester Hospital	01206 747474
Children's Ward	01206 746208 / 746209
Children's Assessment Unit	01206 746200
Children's Elective Care Unit	01206 744237
Accident and Emergency Department	01206 742112





Please ask if you need this leaflet in an alternative format.

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