

Fevers in children



A fever is when the body temperature is above 38°C.

What is a fever and what are the risks?

Fever is:

- Useful: it is the body's normal reaction to help it fight infection
- Common: it is often present in common illnesses such as the common cold
- Not serious in itself: it is rarely the only sign of a serious illness

In most cases, fever subsides without the need for medication.



How do you take your child's temperature?

There are several methods to take a child's temperature and each of them has its advantages and disadvantages. You should take into consideration what is best for your child, depending on their age and whether they have a specific illness. Rectal temperature taking is no longer recommended to avoid injury to the child.



When should fever be treated?

It is important to assess your child's general condition, which will determine the treatment and the urgency of a consultation:

- Irritability
- Persistent crying
- Reduced level of energy and/or alertness
- Loss of appetite
- Sleep disturbances, for example



Age	Method to use	Advantages	Disadvantages	Take note :
Less than 4 weeks	Axillary (in the armpit)	Fast, no risk of injury	Be careful with the accuracy of the thermometer	Thermometer must be in contact with dry skin
More than 4 weeks old	Axillary and tympanic (in the ear)	Fast and reliable	Tympanic temperature taking requires a clean ear canal	The ear should be pulled back to open the ear canal properly



In babies under 3 months of age



Any fever that occurs in the first 3 months of life should be reported to the paediatrician and a medical appointment should be made, even if the child does not appear to be ill.

In children over 3 months of age

Temperature above **38°C**

- Undress the child
- Give the child something to drink
- Do not overheat the room (18-20°C)
- Wait 30 minutes, then either :
 - Good overall condition and a temperature of less than 39°C → **monitor and seek medical advice if there is no improvement**
 - Poor overall condition and/or temperature of 39°C or higher → Give fever medication, preferably as prescribed by your paediatrician and adapted to the child's age → **Monitor and seek medical advice if there is no improvement**

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Important

When your child is ill, call:

1. Your paediatrician
2. The doctors' hotline: 0848 133 133
3. In case of an emergency: 144



Programme cantonal de promotion de la santé et de prévention primaire enfants (0-4 ans) - parents



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