**High temperature (fever) in children**

**A high temperature (fever) is very common in young children. The temperature usually returns to normal within 1 to 4 days.**

**Checking a high temperature**

A normal temperature in babies and children can vary slightly from child to child.

A high temperature is 38C / 100.4F or more.

If your child has a high temperature, they might:

* feel hotter than usual when you touch their back or chest
* feel sweaty
* look or feel unwell
* have a seizure or fit, called a [febrile seizure](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/febrile-seizures/)

Use a digital thermometer, which you can buy from pharmacies and supermarkets, to take your child's temperature.

How to take your child's temperature

1. Place the thermometer inside the top of the armpit.
2. Gently close the arm over the thermometer and keep it pressed to the side of the body.
3. Leave the thermometer in place for as long as it says in the instruction leaflet. Some digital thermometers beep when they're ready.
4. Remove the thermometer. The display will show your child's temperature.

If your child has just had a bath or been wrapped in a blanket, their temperature may be higher for a short time. Wait a few minutes then try again.

**What to do if your child has a high temperature**

If your child or baby has a high temperature, you can usually look after them at home. The temperature should go down over 1 to 4 days.

Do:

* give them plenty of fluids – if your baby is breastfed, continue to breastfeed as normal
* look out for [signs of dehydration](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/dehydration/)
* give them food if they want it
* check on your child regularly, including during the night
* keep them at home
* give them either [paracetamol](https://www.nhs.uk/medicines/paracetamol-for-children/) if they're distressed or uncomfortable – check the packaging or leaflet to make sure the medicine is suitable for your child.
* get medical advice if you're worried about your child, or if the paracetamol is not helping.

**Don’t**

* do not undress your child or sponge them down to cool them – a high temperature is a natural and healthy response to infection
* do not cover them up in too many clothes or bedclothes
* do not give aspirin to children under 16 years of age
* do not alternate ibuprofen and paracetamol, unless a health professional such as a doctor or nurse tells you to
* do not give paracetamol to a child under 2 months
* do not give ibuprofen to a child who is under 3 months, weighs under 5kg, has chickenpox, or is dehydrated
* do not give ibuprofen to children with [asthma](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/asthma/) unless it's been recommended by a doctor.

URGENT VISIT TO HOSPITAL EMERGENCY:

* If your child is under 3 months old and has a temperature of 38C or higher, or you think they have a high temperature
* is 3 to 6 months old and has a temperature of 39C or higher, or you think they have a high temperature
* has other signs of illness, such as a [rash](https://www.nhs.uk/symptoms/rashes-babies-and-children/), as well as a high temperature
* has a high temperature that's lasted for 5 days or more
* does not want to eat, or is not their usual self and you're worried
* is dehydrated – such as nappies that are not very wet, sunken eyes, and no tears when they're crying

**Immediate action required:**

* has a stiff neck
* has a rash that does not fade when you press a glass against it
* is bothered by light
* has a fit ([febrile seizure](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/febrile-seizures/)) for the first time (they cannot stop shaking)
* has unusually cold hands and feet
* has changes to their skin colour such as blue, grey, paler than usual or blotchy skin (this may be harder to see on brown or black skin), or blue, grey or paler than usual lips or tongue
* is drowsy and hard to wake
* is extremely agitated (does not stop crying) or is confused
* has difficulty breathing (you may notice grunting noises or their stomach sucking under their ribcage), breathlessness or breathing very fast
* is not responding like they normally do, or is not interested in feeding or normal activities

Adopted from *NHS / UK*