

# Keeping Baby Healthy:

## Fever in babies younger than 12 months old

### **Fever is a temperature that is higher than normal.**

- Armpit temperature 99° Fahrenheit or higher
- Rectal temperature of 100.4° Fahrenheit or higher
- Temporal (forehead) scan temperature of 100.4° Fahrenheit or higher

Fever helps to tell you that something might be wrong with your baby. The degree of fever does not always tell you how sick your baby is. Babies can have a fever with a mild illness and no fever when they are very sick. How your baby looks and acts when they are sick is more important than their temperature.

### **How do I know when to check my baby's temperature?**

*Check your baby's temperature when:*

- Baby feels hot.
- Baby's face is red.
- Baby does not eat or sleep as usual.
- Baby is fussier, crankier or sleepier than usual.

*Call your baby's health care provider as soon as possible if your baby is less than 3 months old and has a fever.*

### **How should I take my baby's temperature?**

- Take your baby's temperature under their armpit.
- Your baby's health care provider might ask you to take your baby's temperature in their rectum (bottom).

- A digital thermometer is the quickest, easiest and best way to take your child's temperature. It can be used in the mouth, underarm or rectum (bottom). If you plan to use a digital thermometer to take both oral and rectal temperatures, you'll need to get two digital thermometers. Label one for oral use and one for rectal use. Digital thermometers are available at most pharmacies. Read the instructions carefully.
- Temporal artery thermometers are another option. Just know that direct sunlight and cold temperatures after being outside may affect the reading.
- Ear thermometers should not be used for babies under 6 months old. Their ear canals are too small to get an accurate temperature.
- Talk with your child's nurse or doctor if you have any questions about how to take your baby's temperature.

### **When should I try to lower my baby's temperature?**

Fevers are a sign that the body is fighting an infection. The main reason to treat your baby is to make them feel better.

- If your baby acts okay, you do not usually need to give medicine for a fever.
- When your baby is achy and fussy, you might want to give some medicine for fever after talking with their doctor or nurse.



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*continued...*

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- Some common fever medicines are acetaminophen (Tylenol) and ibuprofen (Motrin)
- Do **NOT** give acetaminophen (Tylenol) to a baby **less than 24 pounds or 2 years old** without first talking with your baby's doctor for dosage.
- Do **NOT** give ibuprofen (Motrin) to a baby **less than 12 pounds or 6 months old** without talking to your baby's doctor for dosage. Use Infant's Ibuprofen (Motrin).

### How much fever medicine should I give my child?

Ask your doctor or nurse to give you an acetaminophen or ibuprofen dosage chart. It will tell you how much medicine to give your baby based on their weight and age.

#### Fever medicine tips:

- Don't give more than 4 doses of any one medication in 24 hours.
- Carefully read how much fever medicine to give your baby. Make sure you are giving your baby enough, but not too much, medicine.
- Fill the dropper or medicine syringe to the correct line.

**DO NOT GIVE YOUR BABY ASPIRIN!** Babies can get very sick if they have a virus and take aspirin.

### What other things can I do to make my baby feel better?

- Watch your baby for other signs of illness.
- Breastfeed your baby often if you are breastfeeding.

- Offer water (4 to 8 oz/day), if your baby is over 6 months old. Infants less than a year old should not drink juice.
- Check the number of times your baby wets in 24 hours. Check diapers for heaviness and wetness.
- Your baby can have a short bath to get clean, but don't give them a bath to bring their fever down. Sometimes, if the skin gets too cool, it can make the fever go up!
- Dress your baby in cool, cotton clothes.
- Keep your baby's room comfortably cool.
- If your baby gets cold and has chills, dress them in warmer clothes. Take them off when the chills stop.
- Have your baby rest and play quietly.

### When should I call my baby's health care provider?

- Call if your baby has **any fever** and is less than 3 months old.
- Call if the temperature is 99° Fahrenheit (armpit) or above, even if your baby seems okay.

### Also call if your baby who has a fever:

- Shows changes in behavior
- Has diarrhea
- Has a dry mouth
- Has fever that comes and goes over several days
- Has high-pitched crying
- Is pulling at ears
- Will not eat
- Is irritable
- Is pale
- Has a seizure or has had one before
- Has a skin rash or purple spots on skin
- Has sore or swollen joints
- Has a stiff neck
- Is unresponsive or limp
- Is vomiting
- Is wheezing or has trouble breathing
- Is whimpering
- Has swelling of the soft spot on the head
- Has fever for more than 24 hours.