



## Fever in Children



### Cork Emergency Medicine

#### What is a fever?

A fever or 'temperature' occurs with a reading of 38.0 °C or higher on a thermometer. Fevers are caused by many different types of infection – they are a natural response and are not generally considered harmful. Some are caused by bacteria and will need antibiotics. Most are caused by viruses and don't need treatment: antibiotics do not work on viruses. When your child has a fever, they may have some of the following symptoms:

- Feeling warm or hot to touch
- Shivering
- Poor appetite for food or drinks
- Vomiting/diarrhoea
- Flushed cheeks/skin
- Being 'off form,' crying, or sleepy

#### How I know if my Child has a fever?

Children who are fighting infections may have a very high fever, sometimes above 40 °C. A very high temperature does not put your child at particular risk of seizures. The height of a fever is not necessarily a cause for alarm: a child coping with a virus may have a temperature of 40 °C whilst another child with a fever of 38.7°C may look unwell and need urgent medical attention. Always trust your gut instinct: how unwell your child looks is more important than a number on a thermometer.

#### Treating Fever

- Paracetamol (Calpol, Paralink) and ibuprofen (Nurofen) can help with pain and fever
- Medications for fever (oral liquid or suppository) can be bought without a prescription
- Rectal (suppository) medications may be useful if your child is vomiting or refusing to swallow
- Paracetamol and ibuprofen can be spaced throughout the day or given at the same time; both options are safe. Carefully keep track of the doses given when you are providing both paracetamol and ibuprofen.
- It is not recommended to use cold water or baths to try to reduce a fever.

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If you are concerned, please contact the Emergency Department you first attended:	Mercy University Hospital (021) 230 5011	M-UCC at (St. Mary's Health Campus) (021) 4926900	CUH (021) 4920200	Local Injury Unit Mallow General Hospital (022) 58506	Bantry General Hospital (027) 52900
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Sometimes, paracetamol and ibuprofen will not take a fever away. This is okay. The aim of these medications is to make your child feel better – the fever may remain while their body fights off infection. Giving paracetamol and/ or ibuprofen if your child is unwell will not ‘mask’ a serious illness or prevent a doctor from assessing them.

### When to seek advice from a doctor:

- **If your child is less than 3 months of age and has a fever, they should always be seen by a doctor, even if they are in good form and otherwise well.**
- If your child is becoming dehydrated: refusing to drink, vomiting after liquids, passing less urine or having less frequent or lighter wet nappies.
- If your child is difficult to rouse, floppy, or very lethargic. Sleeping more often when fighting off infection is normal, but being difficult to waken is not.
- Your child develops a ‘non-blanching’ rash: if your child develops a rash, press it gently with a clear glass. If the rash is still visible through the glass, seek help from a doctor.
- If a fever lasts for 5 days or more.
- If your child is not improving or getting worse, or you are worried about your child.

Advice prepared by Dr Sinead Murray and Dr Emma Fauteux March 2024

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