

Fever in children under 5 years

This advice is intended for parents/carers taking their child home after consulting a doctor. Your doctor may recommend different treatments depending on your child's condition.



This is discharge advice for carers of children younger than 5 years who have a fever where we may not know the cause.

About fever in children

- Fever is extremely common in children and usually suggests that your child has an infection
- Your child has a fever if their temperature is over 38°C. The most accurate way of measuring your child's temperature is with a digital thermometer
- Viral infections are far more common than bacterial infections. Symptoms such as runny nose, cough, wheeze, sore throat, red eyes and diarrhoea are more suggestive of a viral infection than a bacterial infection. If a number of people are unwell in the same household, this also suggests a viral infection (because viral infections are easily spread)
- Viral infections tend to get better on their own and do not need treatment with antibiotics

How can I look after my child?

- Offer them simple food and regular drinks. If your baby is breastfed, continue breast feeding
- If they are vomiting, offer small frequent drinks as this is more likely to stay down
- Do not try to control your child's temperature with tepid sponging or fans
- Keep an eye on your child day and night and follow the guidance overleaf
- If a rash appears do 'the Glass Test' (see guidance below)
- Fever is common in babies up to 48 hours after receiving immunisations - consider giving regular paracetamol. If your child is due their vaccinations, postpone until after their fever has improved
- If you need to keep your child away from nursery or school while they are unwell and have a fever please notify the nursery or school

Using medicines to help

- Consider giving paracetamol or ibuprofen for comfort
- Use one and if your child has not improved 2-3 hours later you may want to try giving the other medicine
- Carefully read the instructions on the medicine for dose and frequency. Although both are very safe when used correctly, they may be harmful if too large a dose is given, or if given too often
- You could ask your local pharmacist for more advice about medicines
- In general, we do not recommend cough medicines

The Glass Test

Do the 'glass test' if your child has a rash. Press a glass tumbler firmly against the rash. If you can see the spots through the glass and they do not fade as you press the glass onto the skin then this is called a 'non-blanching rash'.

If you see this type of rash, seek medical advice immediately.

The rash is harder to see on dark skin so check paler areas, such as palms of the hands, soles of the feet and tummy.



(Photo courtesy of the Meningitis Research Foundation 2013)

When should I get help?

 <p>RED</p>	<p>If your child has any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becomes pale, mottled and feels abnormally cold to touch • Is going blue around the lips • Severe breathing difficulty - too breathless to talk / eat or drink • Has a fit / seizure • Becomes extremely agitated (crying inconsolably despite distraction), confused or very lethargic (difficult to wake) • Develops a rash that does not disappear with pressure (see 'The Glass Test' above) • Is under 1 month of age with a temperature of 38°C / 100.4°F or above 	<p>If your child has any of the following:</p> <p>Go to the nearest Hospital Emergency Department or phone 999</p>
 <p>AMBER</p>	<p>If your child has any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is finding it hard to breath • Seems dehydrated (sunken eyes, drowsy or no urine passed for 12 hours) • Is becoming drowsy (excessively sleepy) or irritable (unable to settle them with toys, TV, food or picking up) – especially if they remain drowsy or irritable despite their fever coming down • Has extreme shivering or complains of muscle pain • Is between 1-3 months of age with a temperature of 38°C / 100°F or above; or 3-6 months of age with a temperature of 39°C / 102.2°F or above (but fever is common in babies up to 2 days after they receive vaccinations). • Continues to have a fever of 38.0°C or above for more than 5 days • Seems to be getting worse or if you are worried 	<p>You need to contact a doctor or nurse today.</p> <p>Please ring your GP surgery or call NHS 111 - dial 111</p>
 <p>GREEN</p>	<p>If none of the features in the red or amber boxes above are present.</p>	<p>Self-care</p> <p>Continue providing your child's care at home. If you are still concerned about your child, contact your GP or call NHS 111 – dial 111</p>