

Understanding Fevers in Children

A guide for parents and caregivers

WHEN TO SEEK CARE

GO TO ER NOW

Go to the emergency room immediately if your child has:

- A fever in a baby under 2 months old (rectal temperature above 100.4°F / 38°C)
- Difficulty getting in air, or dusky color
- A seizure or convulsions
- Stiff neck, sensitivity to light, or a purple rash that does not fade when pressed
- True lethargy: difficult to wake, limp, or unresponsive
- Signs of severe dehydration: no urine in 8+ hours, or fewer than 3 wet diapers in a day

SAFELY MONITOR AT HOME IF

Safe to monitor at home if all of the following are true:

- Child is older than 2 months of age
- Child is able to drink some fluids
- Can be comforted and will sleep
- Fever can be brought down with acetaminophen (or ibuprofen in children 6 months or older)

UNDERSTANDING FEVER

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

Fever itself is not worrisome

- How your child is acting matters more than the number. A 104°F fever may feel worse than 101°F, but is not more dangerous.
- Acetaminophen (or ibuprofen for 6+ months), if needed, can help ease the discomfort that comes with fevers such as chills, body aches, and headaches, and to help them feel well enough to continue to drink fluids.
- There is no number that is “too high” and requires an ER visit if the fever is from an illness. The only exception is heat stroke caused by overheating.

WHEN TO COME IN DURING OFFICE HOURS

- Please call during office hours if you would like your child assessed.
- Ear infections, UTIs, and similar illnesses can wait until the office opens, as long as you can keep your child comfortable and reduce the fever with medication.
- If you are not comfortable waiting, please have your child evaluated at an urgent care or ER.
- Fever lasting more than 5 days needs an in-person evaluation.
- We cannot prescribe antibiotics or make appointments after hours.

DOSING CHARTS

Acetaminophen and ibuprofen are dosed by weight. See our dosing guides:

- **Acetaminophen Dosing Chart:** [childrenshealthpartners.com/medicine-dosages/acetaminophen-tylenol](https://www.childrenshealthpartners.com/medicine-dosages/acetaminophen-tylenol)
- **Ibuprofen Dosing Chart:** [childrenshealthpartners.com/medicine-dosages/ibuprofen](https://www.childrenshealthpartners.com/medicine-dosages/ibuprofen)
- If needed, alternate acetaminophen and ibuprofen. **They do not interact.** Allow 4–6 hours between acetaminophen doses and 6–8 hours between ibuprofen doses.