

Being Sent Home with a Fever

Childhood infections are usually communicable which means they can be passed from one person to another. Young children are often more vulnerable to infections because their immune systems are still maturing and they haven't been exposed to all of the germs that can be present in settings where lots of children play and interact.

One of the first signs of an infection can be a fever. It is a natural body response to help defend the body and fight the infection. Turning up the temperature is the body's way of fighting the germs and making the body a less comfortable place for the germs. The fever itself usually causes no harm. Sometimes the child may need some medication to reduce the temperature but it is usually needed more to relieve associated aches and pains with the infection. Fevers don't always need to be treated with medication.

What is a fever?

- The average normal body temperature is 37° C (98.6°F). Body temperatures vary slightly depending on the individual as well as the time of day (highest in the late afternoon 37.2°C (99°F) and lowest in the middle of the night from 2:00 am-4:00 am 36.1°C (97°F)).
- Strenuous exercise (especially in hot weather) and overdressing (especially in infants) can cause a high-normal temperature.
- Both viral and bacterial infections can cause fevers. Remember: antibiotics will not help viral infections and may contribute to the ever growing problem of antibiotic resistance.
- The degree of a fever does NOT tell you how serious your child's illness is. Your child's behavior, rather than the fever is more important.
- True fevers are NOT caused by teething (teething may cause a slight rise in body temperature only).
- Low grade fevers may occur after an immunization. (Low grade = 37.5° to 38°C or 99.5° to 100.4°F)
- The temperature reading and normal parameters will depend on the type of thermometer used (e.g. oral or rectal). Please consult the product insert for details.



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Treating the symptoms of a fever

- Plenty of fluids (e.g. water, diluted apple juice, soup, broth, jello, popsicles).
- Plenty of rest (normally takes a day or two at home to fight the infection by resting - if continuing to do everything they normally would in a day – the illness could end up lasting much longer).
- Remove extra blankets and clothing so heat can leave the body and help lower body temperature (e.g. use a sheet and diaper/underwear with a light shirt).
- Avoid alcohol sponge baths or cold water baths (the alcohol can be absorbed through the skin and the cold bath will induce shivering which in turn causes the body to increase its temperature).

Seeking medical attention

If you are unsure whether or not you should treat a fever or if you should seek medical attention you can contact a nurse at Telehealth 1-866-797-0000. (24 hours/7 days a week). You can also visit the Canadian Pediatric Society website.

Should my child go to daycare or school when they have a fever?

Usually when a child has a fever the child doesn't feel like participating in daycare activities. Children with fevers should stay at home until they are fever free for 24 hours (this includes without using fever reducing medication)

The best care for the child can be given at home where they can receive needed rest in their own familiar environment. This will help the child recover faster from the infection.

Staying at home with a fever is one of the infection control measures in place at daycare to help prevent spreading the infection to other children.



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