# Fever Symptom Checker

# Children Aged 0-12

The Reading Bear

## What is a Fever?

A fever is an increase in body temperature. This can be a normal, healthy response when the body is fighting an infection. A temperature is considered to be a fever if:

- Higher than **37.5 C (99.5 F)** by mouth
- Higher than **38.0 C (100.4 F)** by rectum

## Causes of Fever

Childhood fevers can be caused by many different conditions:

- Viral infections such as the flu, COVID, RSV, or hand, foot and mouth
- Bacterial infections like pneumonia
- Immunizations
- Heat exhaustion
- Inflammatory diseases
- Certain medications

## Fever Prevention

The best way to prevent fevers in your child is to reduce their exposure to infectious diseases. You can reduce the spread of infectious diseases by:

- Encouraging handwashing
- Childhood immunizations, which can decrease the risk of fever-related illnesses
- Staying home if you or your child is feeling unwell
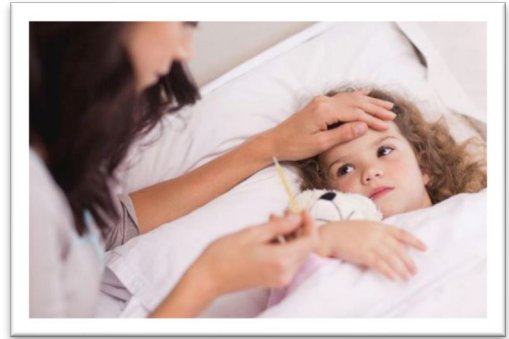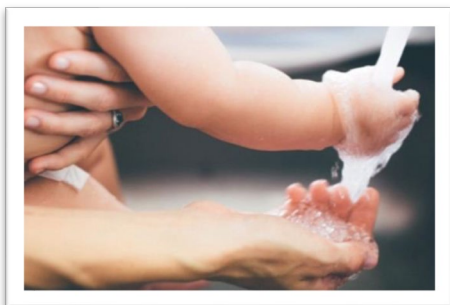


*This symptom checker is only a quick guide. If you are worried about your child, please see a doctor.*

## Fever Myths

1. **All fevers are bad for children.**
   Fevers are a good sign that the body's immune system is working to fight an infection.

2. **Teething can cause fevers.**
   Teething can cause a small increase in body temperature, but it does not cause a true fever. If your child has a fever, consider other illnesses.

3. **The higher the temperature, the more serious the illness.**
   In childhood fevers, how your child feels or is acting is more important.

## How to Take a Temperature

Temperatures can differ depending on how you take them. The most common ways to measure temperature are:

- Under the tongue: most accurate for children 5 years and older
- In the rectum: most accurate from birth to 5 years old
- In the armpit
- In the ear

*Although it is important to monitor your child's fever, how your child **looks and behaves** is more important than the number on the thermometer.*

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## Fever Symptoms

When your child has a fever, they may have the following symptoms:

- Body aches
- Chills
- Increased irritability
- Low energy levels
- Decreased appetite



In children, most fevers tend to appear in the afternoon or evening. They can last up to 2 to 3 days.

**A fever is an emergency when your child …**

- is less than 3 months old with a fever
- is immunocompromised
- has trouble breathing
- has a persistent fever lasting more than 3 days
- develops a rash, stiff neck, or headache
- displays signs of dehydration: dry mouth, urinating less, producing fewer wet diapers, not producing tears
- becomes very sleepy, or is difficult to wake

**If your child has a fever, and is experiencing any one of the above symptoms, you should seek out medical care.**

## Fever Treatment

Most fevers in children can be treated at home. Here are some tips to help your child feel better:

- Make sure your child continues to drink fluids. You can give them extra fluid in the form of popsicles.
- Dress your child in thin clothing to avoid overheating.
- Apply a cool cloth to your child's forehead to help them feel more comfortable.
- Medications, such as **acetaminophen** or **ibuprofen**, can safely bring down your child's fever when they are uncomfortable. Click here for more information on dosing of fever medications.

*Do **not** give your child aspirin (ASA)*

*\*Aspirin/ASA use in children is strongly linked with a rare disease called Reye Syndrome*

## Resources

**8-1-1 Non-Emergency Health Services Line:**

Speak to a doctor, nurse or pharmacist 24/7. Dietician services are available 9am-5pm, M-F.

**HealthLinkBC: Fever or Chills, Age 11 and Younger**

**Fraser Health: Fever in Children**

**BC Children's: When to Seek Emergency vs. Non-emergency Care**