

## WHEN YOUR CHILD HAS A FEVER

### Is a fever dangerous?

A fever is very common in children. Usually a fever is a sign of an infection, most commonly caused by viruses that are *not* serious. A fever is a normal part of fighting this infection. Unless the fever is very high (over 42°C), it is not harmful by itself. More important than the actual temperature is the answer to the question, "Does my child seem sick?" So treat the child, NOT the fever.

### How can I tell if my child has a fever?

There are four ways you can take your child's temperature: by the mouth (oral), by the bum (rectal), under the armpit (axillary) or in the ear (tympanic). Use a digital thermometer. It's made of unbreakable plastic and is easy to read. It's best not to use fever strips as they are not accurate.

### How do I treat my child's fever?

Remember that fever is usually not harmful to your child, and most children are not uncomfortable until fever reaches 39.5°C - 40°C. Lowering the temperature may help your child feel better and less grumpy. You can use either paracetamol or ibuprofen. These medications come in many different forms, such as drops (for infants) and chewable tablets, syrup and tablets for older children. *Never* give aspirin to your child as it may cause Reye's syndrome, a serious illness that can lead to death.

### How much medication do I give my child?

The medication box gives information about usual doses. If your child is under two years of age, or very small or big for his/her age, it may be important to figure out an exact dose.

- For paracetamol: give 10 - 15 mg for every kilogram your child weighs (one kilogram equals about two pounds).

The dose may be repeated every 4 - 6 hours. Never give paracetamol to your child more than five times in 24 hours. See <http://www.nhs.uk/news/2011/11November/Pages/new-child-calpol-paracetamol-doses.aspx> for detailed doses for each age-group

- For ibuprofen: give 5 - 10 mg for every kilogram your child weighs. The dose may be repeated every 6-8 hours.

Never give ibuprofen to your child more than four times in 24 hours.

### What else can I do?

- Make sure your child is comfortable and resting quietly. Check them during the night, too.
- Offer plenty of fluids - which means breast-milk, in breast-fed babies. Call for advice if concerned about dehydration, signs of which include sunken fontanelle ("soft spot"), dry mouth, sunken eyes, poor overall appearance.
- Remove extra blankets and clothing, but don't take off all clothing. Your child may become too cold and start shivering, producing more body heat and causing the temperature to rise again.
- Avoid fanning or sponging, cold or ice water baths, and alcohol baths and rubs.
- More info is available at <http://www.whenshouldiworry.com/>

### When should I seek medical attention?

Contact your GP or NHS 24 if your child:

- is overly grumpy, fussy or irritable, or has a fit
- is very sleepy, low in energy or unresponsive
- has a fever and is less than three months old
- has a fever and a purple rash
- has a fever higher than 39°C or a fever that lasts longer than 5 days or is becoming more sick.