

Taking Your Baby's Temperature

If your baby feels really hot and seems to be running a fever, it's important to take his temperature! There are lots of different thermometers out there, but those old glass ones you probably remember from childhood are no longer recommended because they contain mercury. A digital thermometer is a better bet. Here's how to take baby's temperature:

Rectal Temperature: Taking your baby's temperature rectally will give you the most accurate readings. It's not always necessary, however! When you do it, use only a digital thermometer that is labeled for use in the rectum. Look for one that has a flexible tip and is shaped so that it can not be inserted to far into the rectum. Too deep insertion can cause a perforated rectum. A normal rectal temperature should be 100.2 degrees Fahrenheit or less.

- Disinfect the thermometer with rubbing alcohol or soap and water. Rinse with cool water.
- Coat the end with a blob of petroleum jelly.
- Place your baby crossways on your lap, bottom up. Or arrange him on the changing table as if you were changing his diaper, legs in the air.
- Turn on the thermometer.
- Insert the thermometer slowly into the rectum, no farther than half an inch.
- Hold it in place—do not let go—until it beeps.
- Remove it and note the temperature.
- Disinfect it before you put it away with rubbing alcohol.

Axillary or Under Arm Temperature: Taking baby's temperature under his arm is a good, easy way. Normal underarm temperatures range from 97.6 to 99.0 degrees Fahrenheit.

- Undress the baby from the waist up.
- Hold him on your lap or close by.
- Make sure the underarm area is dry.
- Put the tip of the thermometer under the baby's arm.
- Hold his arm snugly to his side until the thermometer beeps.
- Remove it and note the temperature.
- Disinfect with alcohol before putting away.

Oral Temperature: Wait to take your child's temperature orally until they are 4 or 5 years old. Normal oral temperature is under 99.5 degrees Fahrenheit.

- Wait 30 minutes after your child has eaten or drank anything.
- Disinfect the thermometer with rubbing alcohol.
- Turn it on and insert it under one side of the tongue towards the back.
- Have your child keep it in place using his lips and fingers, not his teeth. His mouth must remain closed; he should breathe through his nose.
- Remove it when it beeps and note the temperature.
- Clean it after use.

Ear Thermometers: Ear thermometers are fast and easy to do but they require you to insert them exactly right to get an accurate reading. If you want to use an ear thermometer you will want to ask your pediatrician to show you the proper technique and practice until you get a consistent reading. Do this before your child is ill, and verify that the reading is correct with a rectal temperature. Do not use ear thermometers on children less than three months old.

| Place for taking your child's temp | Approximate normal temp range | Fever range | Special note |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|---|
| Rectal (in the bottom) | 97°F to 100.3°F | Over 100.3°F | If your baby is younger than 24 months old, take his temp this way. |
| Oral (by mouth) | 97°F to 100°F | Over 100.3°F | Drinking hot or cold liquids just before taking an oral temp can change the reading. Make sure your child does not have anything hot or cold to drink for 20 - 30 minutes before taking his temp. |
| Axillary (under the arm) | 97°F to 100°F | Over 100.3°F | This is the least accurate way to take your child's temp. |

- Take your child's temperature the same way every time.
- A thermometer used in the bottom should not be used in the mouth.
- Clean and store thermometers as the directions on the package tell you.

When should I call the doctor?

- Call your child's doctor **right away** if your child has one or more of the following symptoms:
- He does not smile or play for even a few minutes every four-hours
- He shows signs of dehydration (drying out):
- No urine in six hours in an infant younger than 12 months old
- No urine in more than eight hours in a child older than 12 months old
- No tears when crying
- Sunken eyes
- Dry lips and mouth
- Vomits more than 2 times.
- He is not comfortable, even when held
- He seems to be breathing hard or fast even after the fever has been treated with medicine.
- He develops a rash
- The fever lasts more than three days
- He complains of any persistent pain such as earache, pain with voiding or stomach pain.
- For a baby less than 2 months old with **any fever** who has not yet been checked by a doctor for the fever.
- For a baby 2-6 months old with a **fever more than 102.2°F (rectally)** who has not yet been checked by a doctor for the fever.
- For a baby 6-24 months old with a **fever more than 103°F (rectally)** who has not yet been checked by a doctor for the fever.
- You have any questions or concerns about how your child looks or feels.