



The average normal temperature is about 98.6°F (37°C).

Signs & Symptoms

A **fever** means that body temperature is higher than:

- 99°F (37.2°C) under the arm.
- 99.5°F (37.5°C) by mouth or ear.
- 100.4°F (38°C) by rectum. Rectal temperatures are advised for infants.



Use a digital or ear thermometer to measure temperature.

Don't use a glass mercury thermometer. If it breaks, droplets of toxic mercury can be released. If this happens, don't use a vacuum or broom to clean up the mercury. Call your local health or fire department to find out what to do.

Fever

Causes

Fever is usually a sign of another problem, such as an infection.

Body temperature changes during the day. It is usually lowest in the morning and highest in the late afternoon and evening. Other factors can increase body temperature. These include:

- Wearing too much clothing.
- Exercise.
- Hot, humid weather.
- Taking a temperature by mouth after drinking a hot liquid, like tea.

Treatment

Treatment includes self-care measures and treating the cause.

Questions to Ask

Does an infant or child up to 3 years old have any of these problems?

- Temperature of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher in a baby less than 3 months old.
- Temperature of 104°F (40°C) or higher in a child between 3 months and 3 years old.
- The child with a fever is crying and can't be consoled.



NO

With a fever, do any of these signs occur?

- Shortness of breath or a hard time breathing.
- Stiff neck; severe, headache that lasts; nausea or vomiting; and the person can't be roused.
- Acting very cranky.
- Confusion. Mental status changes.
- Severe pain in the abdomen.



NO

Flowchart continued on next page



Fever, Continued

With a fever, do any of these signs occur?

- Pain, redness, and swelling anywhere on the body.
- Ear pain that persists or pain in the sinuses (face).
- Pain in the chest with deep breaths.
- Sore throat.
- Green, yellow, or bloody-colored discharge from the nose, ears, or throat. A cough with colored phlegm.
- Pain or burning feeling when passing urine or passing urine often.
- Abnormal vaginal pain, discharge, or bleeding.

YES



NO

Has the fever lasted longer than 3 days without getting better?

YES



NO

Do any of these problems occur?

- Temperature of 99.5°F (37.5°C) and up to 100.4°F (38°C) in an infant younger than 3 months old.
- Temperature of 102.2°F (39°C) and up to 104°F (40°C) in a child 3 months to 3 years old.
- Temperature above 104°F (40°C) in a person between 3 years and 64 years old.
- Temperature of 102.2°F (39°C) or higher in a person age 65 years or older or in a person whose immune system is lowered.

YES



NO

Has the person with the fever recently been in the hospital or had surgery? Or, does the person have a chronic illness, such as asthma, heart disease, lung disease, kidney disease, cancer, or diabetes?

YES



NO

Do any of these statements apply?

- The fever went away for more than 24 hours, but came back.
- The fever came soon after a visit to another country.
- A fever and feeling dizzy came after having a DTaP or MMR vaccine.

YES



NO



Self-Care / Prevention

- Drink lots of fluids, such as fruit juice, water, etc.
- Take a sponge bath with warm (about 70°F) water. Don't use cold or cool water. **Don't use rubbing alcohol.**
- Take the right dose of an over-the-counter medicine to reduce fever, as directed.
- Rest.
- Don't do heavy exercise.
- Don't wear too many clothes. Don't use too many blankets.



Rest when you have a fever.

Flowchart continued in next column