

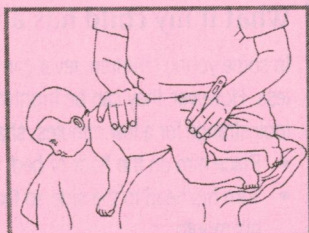
## How to take your child's temperature

While you often can tell if your child is warmer than usual by feeling his forehead, only a thermometer can tell if he has a fever and how high the temperature is. There are several types of thermometers and methods for taking your child's temperature.

Mercury thermometers should not be used. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) encourages parents to remove mercury thermometers from their homes to prevent accidental exposure to this toxin.

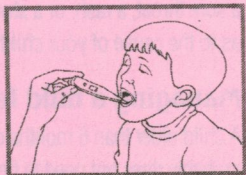
**Rectal:** If your child is younger than 3 years of age, taking his temperature with a rectal digital thermometer provides the best reading.

- Clean the end of the thermometer with rubbing alcohol or soap and water. Rinse it with cool water. Do not rinse with hot water.
- Put a small amount of lubricant, such as petroleum jelly, on the end.
- Place your child belly down across your lap or on a firm surface. Hold him by placing your palm against his lower back, just above his bottom.
- With the other hand, turn on the thermometer switch and insert the thermometer 0.5" to 1" into the anal opening. Hold the thermometer in place loosely with 2 fingers, keeping your hand cupped around your child's bottom. Do not insert the thermometer too far. Hold in place for about 1 minute, until you hear the "beep." Remove the thermometer to check the digital reading.



**Oral:** Once your child is 4 or 5 years of age, you may prefer taking his temperature by mouth with an oral digital thermometer.

- Clean the thermometer with lukewarm soapy water or rubbing alcohol. Rinse with cool water.



- Turn on the switch and place the sensor under his tongue toward the back of his mouth. Hold in place for about 1 minute, until you hear the "beep." Check the digital reading.
- For a correct reading, wait at least 15 minutes after your child has had a hot or cold drink before putting the thermometer in his mouth.

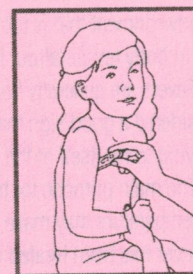
**Ear:** Tympanic thermometers, which measure temperature inside the ear, are another option for older babies and children.

- Gently put the end of the thermometer in the ear canal. Press the start button. You will get a digital reading of your child's temperature within seconds.
- While it provides quick results, this thermometer needs to be placed correctly in your child's ear to be accurate. Too much earwax may cause the reading to be incorrect.



**Underarm (Axillary):** Although not as accurate, if your child is older than 3 months of age, you can take his underarm temperature to see if he has a fever.

- Place the sensor end of either an oral or rectal digital thermometer in your child's armpit.
- Hold his arm tightly against his chest for about 1 minute, until you hear the "beep." Check the digital reading.



Other methods for taking your child's temperature are available. They are not recommended at this time. Ask your pediatrician for advice.

## Sponging

Your pediatrician may recommend that you try sponging your child with lukewarm water in cases such as the following:

- Your child's temperature is above 104°F (40°C).
- She is vomiting and unable to take medication.
- She has had a febrile seizure in the past (see "What if my child has a febrile seizure?").

Sponging may reduce your child's temperature as water evaporates from her skin. Your pediatrician can advise you on this method.

Do not use cold water to sponge your child, as this could cause shivering. That could increase her temperature. Never add alcohol to the water. Alcohol can be absorbed into the skin or inhaled, causing serious problems such as a coma.

Usually 5 to 10 minutes in the tub is enough time for a child's temperature to start dropping. If your child becomes upset during the sponging, simply let her play in the water. If she is still bothered by the bath, it is better to remove her even if she has not been in long enough to reduce her temperature. Also remove her from the bath if she continues to shiver because shivering may increase body temperature.

Do not try to reduce your child's temperature to normal too quickly. This could cause the temperature to rebound higher.

Be sure to call your pediatrician if your child still "acts sick" once her temperature is brought down, or if you feel that your child is very sick. Also call if the fever persists for

- More than 24 hours in a child younger than 2 years of age
- More than 3 days in a child 2 years of age or older

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

From your doctor

Nagireddi Pediatrics

American Academy  
of Pediatrics



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American Academy of Pediatrics  
PO Box 747  
Elk Grove Village, IL 60009-0747  
Web site — <http://www.aap.org>

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