

Taking your temperature

Fever/Febrile convulsion



What is normal

Your normal body temperature changes. These changes can be caused by exercise, eating, sleeping and even the time of day - you'll usually find that your temperature is highest in the early evening and lowest in the early hours of the morning.



The average body temperature, taken with a thermometer in the mouth, is 37°C (98.6°F), but anywhere between 36.5°C and 37.2°C (97.7°F and 99°F) can be considered normal. Armpit temperatures are 0.2°C to 0.3°C lower than this.

A fever in adults is a temperature of 38°C (100.4°F) or above.

Some medicines can help to bring down your temperature. Paracetamol, ibuprofen or aspirin all work in this way. Never give aspirin to children under 16 years of age.

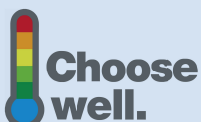
What causes fever?

Fever is caused by the release of certain chemicals by the immune system, usually as a result of infection or inflammation. Fever is an important sign that someone is ill and a cause should always be established.

Looking after yourself at home

Not every fever needs medical attention. There are several things you can do to help bring your temperature down and make yourself more comfortable:

- Keep the room at a comfortable temperature, but make sure fresh air is circulating
- Drink plenty of cold water to prevent dehydration
- Get some ice cubes to suck
- Take off excessive layers of clothing - small babies or children may be left in a thin vest



For more information, help and support go to www.choosewellmanchester.org.uk or visit NHS Choices at www.nhs.uk

Choose the right care

When to contact a doctor

Fever is rarely harmful, but at very high temperatures it can cause problems. A high fever may also be a sign of serious illness. Call your doctor if you're worried, especially if:


- You suspect an infection, which might need antibiotic treatment
- The fever is higher than 38.5°C (101.3°F)
- You have a stiff neck, an unusual rash or difficulty breathing

How to check your temperature if you do not have a thermometer

There are some common signs and symptoms when your temperature goes above its normal level. These will vary between individuals and may come and go as long as your temperature is high. If a thermometer is not available, the following signs and symptoms may be a good indication you have a high temperature:


- **Skin feels hot to touch** – Place a hand on your forehead or other part of the body and it will feel noticeably hotter than usual and may be either dry or wet from sweat. NB: do not feel the hands and feet as these can feel cold when the temperature is high.
- **Flushed skin** – When you have a temperature your skin will often become flushed (red). This is particularly noticeable on the face, especially the cheeks. However, it may be more difficult to see on darker skin.
- **Shivering** – As your temperature goes up and down it is common to shiver and feel very cold even when those around you are feeling comfortable.
- **Feeling hot and cold** – Alternating between feeling hot and maybe sweaty, and cold and maybe shivering is an indication that you have a high temperature.
- **Other signs** – Other signs can include feeling tired and weak. Children may show no interest in playing. Loss of appetite is common. However, these symptoms on their own do not necessarily indicate a high temperature.

What to do next...




Choose are at home if...

- You have a fever
- If in doubt, you can call your GP or the NHS 111 service for advice



Choose your Pharmacist, health visitor or GP if...

- Your temperature goes above 40°C (104°F), even if it's the middle of the night



Call 999 A&E if...

- You have a blotchy red rash that does not fade or change colour when you place a glass against it
- You are having difficulty breathing



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