

### Christchurch Hospital

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#### What is Fever?

Fever is a rise in the body temperature above 'normal'. Think of 'normal' temperature as around 37 degrees but may be up to 38 degrees Celsius. Body temperature normally varies during the day. Warm weather, exercise, hot drinks and overdressing can all raise body temperature.

#### What causes fever?

Fever is the body's natural response to a viral or bacterial infection. Viral infections are far more common and do not need antibiotics. Fever helps the immune system to protect the body from infection. Fevers are not usually harmful unless they reach 42°. However, young babies with fever do need to be checked by a doctor.

#### What should I do if my child has a fever?

Remember that fevers are common in children. Watch your child for other signs of infection/illness. Contact your GP if you are uncertain. Provide comfort.

#### What signs of illness should I look for?

Rash; unusual sleepiness or floppiness; pain; irritability or persistent crying; inability to swallow; breathing difficulty; vomiting or loss of appetite.

#### When should I see my GP?

Deciding when to take your child to the doctor should not be based on temperature alone. Pay as much attention to the child's behaviour and other signs of illness as to the numbers on the thermometer. See your doctor if your child:

- Has other signs of illness.
- Is less than 3 months old and has a temperature above 38 degrees Centigrade. Call your doctor even if your child otherwise seems fine, just to be sure.
- Is any age and has a temperature greater than 40 degrees Centigrade.
- Has a fever that persists for three days despite your comfort cares.
- Has been overseas in the last few weeks
- Has been in contact with an infectious disease

#### How can I make my child feel more comfortable?

If your child has a fever but is content, eating, drinking or playing, you do not need to do anything. Remember the fever is helping your child fight infection. If your child is not comfortable, you can help by:

- Allowing your child to rest or do quiet activity.
- Giving your child frequent small drinks of clear fluid, e.g. water, diluted fruit juice or cordial.
- Dressing your child in light clothing.
- Putting on more clothes or a blanket if your child feels chilled and removing the clothes or blanket when they feel warmer.



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- Paracetamol (e.g. Panadol, Pamol) may reduce pain and misery and help your child feel better. However, do not give for more than two days without seeing your doctor.

**If your child seems well and is happy, there is no need to treat a fever with Paracetamol.**

- If the fever is above 38.5° and your child is miserable or has other symptoms such as a sore throat, they may be given Paracetamol in the correct dose (see over page).
- Do not give children Aspirin for a fever. Aspirin-based medicines can be harmful for children.

#### How much Paracetamol should I give?

The usual dose is 15mg of paracetamol per kg of body weight, no more often than 4 hourly, no more than 4 doses per day. Do not give regularly for more than two days. See your GP if they are still feverish.

For example, if your child weighs 10kg: 15mg x 10kg = 150mg 4 hourly.

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The usual dose for your child is: \_\_\_\_\_ Based on today's weight of \_\_\_\_\_ kg

Paracetamol liquid comes in two strengths: 120mg/5mls and 250mg/5mls. Please check that you are giving the right dose for the strength you have. Make sure that medicines always have a child proof cap and that bottles are stored out of reach.

#### How can I measure body temperature?

- Your child's skin may feel hot but you need to use a thermometer to measure temperature accurately.
- Digital thermometers are the most common, they are easy to use, accurate and usually the cheapest.
- Take temperature under the arm under 5 years. Place the tip of the thermometer in the middle of the armpit and hold in place by holding your child's arm snugly against his or her side. Hold in place for two minutes or according to the instructions.
- If your child is co-operative and is five years of age or older, you may take their temperature in the mouth. Ear thermometers cannot be used for young babies and are more expensive. If you have an ear thermometer, make sure you read the instructions.

Information on your child's admission will be sent to your GP.

#### Have you changed your GP? Do we have your current GP recorded correctly?

If you do not have a regular GP, please talk to your nurse who can give you a list of GP's in your area.

**If you have been discharged from the Children's Acute Assessment Unit, the staff will phone you the next day to check on your child's progress and answer any questions you may have.**

**If you are concerned over the next 24 hours, please contact us on 364 0428.**

**Continue to contact your GP for ongoing care of your child.**

Children's health information website: [www.kidshealth.org.nz](http://www.kidshealth.org.nz)

Christchurch Hospital website: [www.cdhb.govt.nz](http://www.cdhb.govt.nz)

