

How to Take a Baby's Axillary Temperature

An elevated temperature can be a sign of illness in your baby. When a baby is sick, the temperature can change quickly. Take a baby's temperature under the arm (axilla), unless directed otherwise by your doctor.

How Temperature is Measured

The common scale for measuring body temperature in the United States is degrees Fahrenheit (F). Other countries may use the Centigrade or Celsius scale (C). **Normal body temperature is 98.6 degrees F or 37 degrees C.**

Take your baby's temperature:

- When baby feels warm to the touch
- Any changes in your baby's health

What Type of Thermometer to Use

- Digital thermometers are safe and reliable for babies. They can be purchased at most grocery and drug stores for about \$5.00. Disposable covers can also be bought at the stores.
- Ear thermometers can be used for babies older than 3 months of age.

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Learn more about your health care.

- Forehead strips or temporal thermometers and pacifier thermometers are not as reliable and not recommended for accurate readings.
- Glass thermometers are **NOT** recommended for use with babies. The mercury in them is toxic and can spill if the thermometer breaks.

Taking a temperature using a digital thermometer

- Clean the thermometer before and after use with soap and cool water or rubbing alcohol.
- Make sure the baby's underarm is dry.
- Turn the thermometer on and cover with a disposable cover if available.
- Check that the screen is clear of any earlier readings.
- Place the thermometer under the baby's arm in the armpit.
- Place the baby's arm down and across his chest to keep the thermometer in place.
- Stay with the baby and hold the thermometer in place until it signals that it is done, often a beep or series of beeps.
- Read the temperature. A normal axillary temperature is 98.6 degrees F.



When to Call the Doctor

- Call your doctor if your baby is **less than 2 months old** and has a temperature greater than 99.8 degrees F axillary.
- For a baby **older than 2 months**, call the doctor if the temperature is greater than 100.5 degrees F axillary.

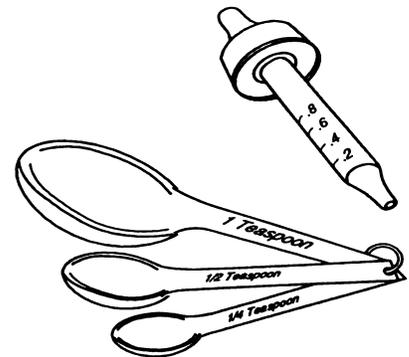
When Your Baby Has a Fever

A fever is a rise in body temperature above what a normal temperature is for your baby. It is the body's normal defense response against infection. How high a fever is does not always tell how sick your baby may be. Your baby can be just as sick with a fever of 100.3 degrees as 102 degrees. Your baby may develop a fever after active play or from an emotional upset.

Medicine is not always necessary to bring a fever down. Dress the baby in loose clothing, such as a t-shirt, booties and a diaper, or give a luke-warm bath. If you think medicine is needed, first call your doctor. Your doctor will tell you what medicine to give your baby and how much to give.

How to Measure Medicine

1. If you use a dropper to measure the amount of medicine, hold it at eye level to get the correct amount. After using the dropper, clean it inside and out with hot soapy water.
2. If you are measuring the medicine in a spoon, use a cooking measuring spoon, since sizes of teaspoons vary.
3. After giving the medicine, try to keep your baby quiet for 2 hours to see if the temperature comes down to normal. After 2 hours, take the temperature again. If the fever has gone up, a luke-warm bath may help reduce the fever.



How to Give a Luke-warm Bath

1. Fill the bathtub with 2 inches of luke-warm water. Test the bath's temperature on your wrist. The water should feel warm, not hot. If you use a bath thermometer, the water temperature should be between 98.6 and 100 degrees. **Do not add alcohol to the water** because it can drop the baby's temperature too fast and cause chilling.
2. Remove the baby's clothing.

3. Gently place your baby in the bath tub. Support the head and back in a sitting or cradled position.
4. Stay with your baby at all times during the bath.
5. Use a wash cloth or sponge to wipe your baby's entire body with the warm water. Do this for 20 minutes.
6. If your baby starts to shiver, stop sponging and wrap your child in a dry towel. When the shivering stops, warm the water and start again.
7. Remove your baby from the bathtub and dry him or her with a towel. Put a light blanket around your baby.
8. Wait 30 minutes and take your baby's temperature.
9. If the temperature is still high, repeat the sponging.



Call your doctor or nurse if you have any questions about caring for your baby with a fever.

☒ **Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.**