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Fever in Children

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When your baby or child has a fever its natural to worry. My guide, written from years of experience as a local GP and a mother, will help you cope.

You should never ignore your gut instincts. If you feel something is wrong, see a doctor. You know your child best.

What is a fever?

A fever is a higher than normal body temperature.

Normal is up to 37.5 and over 38 is usually considered a temperature or fever. Do not rely on forehead thermometers as they give inaccurate readings.

What should I do?

In a baby under 3 months, a fever means that they need to see a doctor.

In infants 3 months and older who are still drinking normally, passing wee and if nothing else is worrying you, it's OK to give infant paracetamol and watch them closely. Ill children need a parent or close family to look after them.

Older infants and children can have children's paracetamol at the correct dose and children's Ibuprofen if needed.

Anything else?

Extra drinks can really help. An ill child can become dry (dehydrated) so drinks little-and-often can stop this happening. Babies need either breast or bottle, (breast feeding mothers should drink extra too) and in older kids, diluted juice and water are very important. You can tempt them with ice pops too. Check the colour of the wee, it should be pale yellow. If they aren't passing wee, see a doctor that day. Write down when they had a drink and when they had a wee.

Is it serious?

Most illnesses are viruses and get better on their own. Making your child comfortable with your company, drinks and medicine is usually all there is to it. But there are serious causes of fever like sepsis and meningitis.

How do I know?

Look at your child - are they different in themselves?

Have they stopped focusing or responding to you? Are they unusually drowsy? Look at the skin, is it a funny colour, mottled or bluey or have they got a rash?

Are they crying in an odd way, or grunting? Is the breathing laboured? Are they floppy?

IF YES RING 999.

If your child has a fever and is different to usual but they are not seriously unwell, you should call or go down to your GP Practice and explain that you feel that your child needs to see someone that day. If the practice is closed, phone 111 to get seen by the out-of-hours team.