

# Fevers

Advice for parents and carers of children aged 5 years old and under.



## Under 6 months?

**If your baby is under 6 months and has a fever, seek medical advice without delay from your Health Visitor, GP, Practice Nurse or A&E.**

### Fevers in children

A fever (high temperature) is usually the first sign that your child is fighting an illness: it is a symptom rather than an illness in itself.

You will probably notice that your child's temperature rises. This rise in temperature is the body's way of attempting to kill infections in your child's system.

Most fevers in children are not serious and are due to the common infections of childhood such as coughs, colds and other viral infections. However, sometimes a fever is a symptom of a serious infection.

This leaflet gives some advice on what to do when your child has a fever. The "traffic light" diagram gives some pointers on when and where to seek advice in your local area and signs to look out for when things are more serious.

## Warning signs that your child is dehydrated

It is important that your child does not get dehydrated.

Signs of dehydration include:

- A dry mouth,
- no tears,
- sunken eyes,
- the soft spot (fontanelle) at the top of your baby's head is more dipped in than usual,
- your child's nappy remains dry or they have not passed urine for around 6-8 hours,
- poor overall appearance, lethargy, unexpected drowsiness or breathing problems.

## How to look after your feverish child (self-care)

If your child does not have any symptom listed in the red or amber boxes in the 'traffic light' pages of this leaflet, then you can care for your child at home.

### Keeping your child comfortable

- Check your child regularly during the day and also through the night.
- If a rash appears, do the 'Glass Test' as explained overleaf (see page 5).
- Do not under or over-dress your child.
- Ensure your child drinks regularly. (If you are breastfeeding offer regular breastfeeds).

## Giving medicines

If your child is in pain or distressed you can give them liquid paracetamol or ibuprofen, but always follow the instructions on the medical container or ask your pharmacist. Please note ibuprofen is not recommended for children diagnosed with asthma.

Never exceed the maximum dose for paracetamol or ibuprofen in any 24 hour period. We advise keeping a diary of when you give each dose of medicine so that you do not give your child too much of either medicine.

**Do not give aspirin to a child under 16.**

**Please ask your local community pharmacist for more advice about medicines.**

## Letting others know

If your child is due to have immunisations, please contact your Practice Nurse, GP or Health Visitor for advice as there may be no need to delay the appointment.

Keep your child away from nursery or school while the fever persists, and notify the nursery or school of the illness. Please note your child's temperature may come down if you have given them paracetamol or ibuprofen. However, if they have other signs of illness they may still be infectious to other children.

## REMEMBER:

**Children's health can quickly improve or deteriorate rapidly. Trust your instincts if you are worried please contact 111 or speak to your child's GP.**

## The glass tumbler test

If your child has a rash, you can do something called the 'Glass Test.' The photograph shows how you can do this. Press a glass tumbler firmly against the rash. If you can see the spots through the glass and they do not fade as you press the glass onto the skin then this is called a 'non-blanching rash'.

**If you see this type of rash, seek medical advice immediately.**

The rash can be harder to see on dark skin so check paler areas, such as palms of the hands, soles of the feet and tummy.



Photo courtesy of Meningitis Now

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



RED

### If your child...

- becomes unresponsive, or
- becomes blue, or
- is finding it hard to breathe, or
- has a fit, or
- develops a rash that does not disappear when you do the 'Glass Test'.



### You need emergency help

Call 999 or go straight to the nearest hospital Emergency (A&E) Department.

Your nearest hospitals (open 24 hours, 7 days a week):

- Frimley Park, Surrey
- Hillingdon Hospital
- John Radcliffe, Oxford
- Milton Keynes Hospital
- Royal Berkshire, Reading
- Stoke Mandeville Hospital, Aylesbury
- Wexham Park Hospital, Slough



AMBER

### If your child...

- is not drinking, or
- has signs of dehydration\*, or
- their fever has lasted more than five days, or
- if your child's health gets worse or you are worried, or
- Is under 6 months old.

\*See page 3



### You need to contact a nurse or doctor today

Please telephone your GP surgery or, if it is closed, call **NHS 111**.



GREEN

### If your child...

Has none of the symptoms listed in the red and amber boxes above.



### Self-care

You can care for your child at home using the advice on this leaflet.

If you feel you need more advice, please contact your Health Visitor, GP Surgery or your local pharmacy.

Find links to these at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

You can also call **NHS 111** for advice.

## Some useful information

If you need advice please try:

**Your local pharmacy can be found at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)**

**Health Visitor:**.....

**Your GP Surgery:**.....

Please contact your GP when the surgery is open or call **NHS 111** when the GP surgery is closed. **NHS 111** provides advice for urgent care needs. It is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls from landlines and mobile phones are free.

**NHS Choices:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk) for online advice and information

### **Buckinghamshire - Family Information Service**

**Email:** [familyinfo@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:familyinfo@buckscc.gov.uk)

**Tel:** 01296 383065 **Text:** 07786 202920

**Web:** [www.bucksfamilyinfo.org](http://www.bucksfamilyinfo.org)

### **Berkshire - Slough Family Information Service**

**Tel:** 01753 476 589 **Web:** [www.servicesguide.slough.gov.uk](http://www.servicesguide.slough.gov.uk)

### **Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead**

**Tel:** 01628 683 800 **Web:** [www.rbwm.gov.uk](http://www.rbwm.gov.uk)

The Children and Young People Urgent Care Advisory Group is made up of child health specialists from across the NHS and partner agencies such as the Local Authority and is led by NHS Buckinghamshire Clinical Commissioning Group. We are a cross-organisational and multi-specialist group working to improve child health.

This leaflet has been produced after careful consideration of the evidence available including but not exclusively from NICE, SIGN, EBM data and the NHS.

