

What to do when your child has a fever

Advice sheet for carers of children younger than 5 years who have a fever

ABOUT FEVER IN CHILDREN

On average, a child will have eight mild infections before they are 18 months old. It is very common for young children to develop a fever when they have an infection. This is your child's normal way to help fight infection. Most children with a fever can be safely looked after at home.

IF:

- your child's health gets worse
- you are worried
- you have concerns looking after your child at home
- the fever lasts longer than five days

Contact your GP as soon as possible or phone this number:
West Yorkshire Urgent Care Services
0345 605 9999

IF:

- your child has a fit **phone 999**
- your child develops a rash that does not disappear with pressure (see the **'tumbler test'** at the end of this sheet) **phone 999** or take them to A&E as soon as possible

All children's A&E services in Leeds are now at Leeds General Infirmary. There is no A&E for children under 16 years old at St James's Hospital, Leeds

PREVENTING DEHYDRATION

Offer your child regular drinks (where a baby or child is breastfed the most appropriate fluid is breastmilk).

Look for signs of dehydration:

- sunken fontanelle (soft spot on a baby's head)
- sunken eyes
- dry mouth
- no tears
- irritability or drowsiness
- fewer wet nappies

If you find signs of dehydration encourage your child to drink more fluids and seek further advice if you are worried.

MEDICINES TO REDUCE TEMPERATURE

It's not necessary to use medicines (paracetamol or ibuprofen) to treat your child's temperature. But if your child has a fever and is distressed or very unwell, you can help to make them feel more comfortable by giving them either paracetamol or ibuprofen (please read the instructions on the bottle first). Don't give these medicines at the same time.

If your child has not improved 2-3 hours later, you may want to try giving the other medicine.

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

SPONGING

Do not sponge your child with water.

This does not help to reduce fever.

CHECKING ON YOUR CHILD

Check your child during the night for rashes and to see if they are getting better. If a rash appears, do the tumbler test (see below). If you are concerned that your child is not improving phone the number on the front of this sheet to seek advice.

Keep your child away from nursery or school while they have a fever and notify the school or nursery of the illness.

THE TUMBLER TEST

Do the 'tumbler test' if your child has a rash. Press a glass tumbler firmly against the rash. If you can see the spots through the glass and they do not fade this is called a **'non-blanching rash'**. If this rash is present seek medical advice immediately. The rash is harder to see on dark skin so check paler areas, such as palms of the hands, soles of the feet, tummy and inside the eyelids.

(Photo courtesy of the Meningitis Research Foundation)

