

HealthInfo Canterbury

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Treating fever (high temperature) in children

You can look after your child with a fever at home if they:

- are drinking and eating well
- are still interacting with you
- don't look sick.

Undress your child so that they are just wearing a single layer (maybe a singlet and pants). Make sure the room is not too hot or too cold. These are the best and most comfortable ways to bring your child's temperature down. It's best not to give your child a bath or shower to cool them. You could use a cool face cloth.



Your child may need extra rest or they may want to play. This is OK.

Encourage them to drink fluids and eat healthy small meals.

If your child is happy, and they are not unwell, you don't need to do anything more. You don't need to treat the fever with a medicine.

If your child is miserable because of the fever, you can give them [paracetamol](#) to make them more comfortable. You must follow the dosage instructions on the bottle. It's dangerous to give more than the recommended dose.

You don't need to give paracetamol to your child before or after immunisation.

If your doctor gives your child [ibuprofen](#), use it only if your child is miserable.

Don't give your child cold or flu medicines.

Never give your child aspirin as this may increase the risk of [Reye's syndrome](#), which is a rare and serious illness.

Treating fever in children less than 3 months old

Young babies (less than 3 months old) need a different and more cautious approach. Babies get fevers for the same reasons as older children, but they are not as good at fighting off infections.

Always take your baby to a doctor if they have a fever and are less than 3 months old. If you are worried, take them to your doctor even if they do not have a fever.

Some babies may have an unstable temperature with an infection. They may be colder than normal. In a sick baby this is a worrying sign and is a reason to see a doctor urgently.

You need to keep your baby warm but they can get too hot if you wrap them in too many layers when they are in a warm place. A good guide is to dress your baby in one more layer than you are comfortable wearing in the same environment.

When to see a doctor

If you are worried about your child, whether or not there is a fever, you should take them to see a doctor.

If your child has already seen a doctor but they are getting worse, go back to your doctor.

For more detail about when to see a doctor see [Overview of fever \(high temperature\) in children](#).

Adapted from [KidsHealth NZ](#) by HealthInfo [clinical advisers](#). Last reviewed April 2020.

Canterbury

District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora o Waitaha