

Fever Management and Medication Dosing

What is a fever?

A **fever** is when your child's temperature is higher than the normal body temperature. A body temperature measurement of **100.4 °F (38 °C) or higher**, taken either orally (by mouth) or rectally (in the butt), is considered a fever.

- You can take your child's **oral temperature** by putting the thermometer tip under your child's tongue, with their mouth closed.
- You can take your child's **rectal temperature** by putting the thermometer tip into your child's bottom (anus) with a small amount of lubricating jelly.

Fever is often the body's response to a bacterial or viral infection. The fever is generally harmless, but your child may not feel well because of the infection that is causing the fever.

How should I treat my child's fever?

How you treat your child's fever depends on their age.

- If your child is 2 months or younger, contact a doctor or emergency services as soon as possible for treatment.
- If your child is older than 2 months, you may treat their fever with a medication called acetaminophen (more information and dosing instructions are below).
 - You only need to treat the fever if your child is uncomfortable (for example, if they have trouble sleeping or if they're crying or not eating). The main goal for medication treatment is to make your

child more comfortable while they have a fever, not to stop the fever.

- If your child is older than 6 months, you may give them either acetaminophen or a medication called ibuprofen (more information is below). Only give them medication if your child's fever makes them uncomfortable.
 - Do not give aspirin to children under 18 years of age.

Other things you can do when your child has a fever to make them more comfortable are:

- Give them extra fluids (water or juice) in small but frequent amounts.
- Give them lukewarm sponge baths.
- Put cool washcloths on their forehead or the back of their neck.

When should I call my doctor if my child has a fever?

Call your doctor if your child has a fever and any of the following are true:

- Your child is 2 months old or younger and they have gotten a vaccination or immunization in the past 24 hours.
- Your child has had a fever for more than 3 days.
- Your child develops other symptoms, including:
 - Having to work harder to breathe
 - Cough
 - Vomiting
 - Diarrhea
 - Difficult or painful urination (peeing)
 - Not responding normally to you
 - Not wanting to eat or drink

When should I take my child to the emergency department for a fever?

Take your child to the nearest emergency room (ER) if they have a fever and any of the following are true:

- Your child is 2 months or younger and has not gotten a vaccination or immunization in the last 24 hours.
- Your child has a seizure.
- Your child looks or acts very sick with their fever, and they have other symptoms like:
 - Difficult to wake up
 - Stiff neck
 - Trouble breathing
 - Unable to drink fluids
 - Crying without tears
 - Dry diaper for at least 8 hours
 - Dry mouth with cracked lips

How much medication should I give my child for their fever?

Acetaminophen: Information and dose instructions

Acetaminophen is available over-the-counter (without a prescription) to treat your child's pain and fever. How much you should give your child depends on their weight. Find the correct dose by finding your child's weight and the type of acetaminophen medication you have in the table below.

- Abbreviations: mg = milligrams, ml = milliliters, tsp = teaspoons
- Dose charts are for US products only. Always doublecheck the medication strength if you buy the medication from outside the US.

Medication type	Your child's weight (in pounds)								
	6-11	12-17	18-23	24-35	36-47	48-59	60-71	72-95	96 or more
Total single dose amount (in mg)	40	80	120	160	240	325	400	480	650
Infant liquid (160 mg/5 ml)	1.25 ml	2.5 ml	3.75 ml	5 ml	-	-	-	-	-
Children's liquid (160 mg/5 ml)	1.25 ml	2.5 ml	3.75 ml	5 ml	7.5 ml	10 ml	12.5 ml	15 ml	20 ml
Children's liquid (160 mg/1 tsp)	-	½ tsp	¾ tsp	1 tsp	1½ tsp	2 tsp	2½ tsp	3 tsp	4 tsp
Chewable Junior Strength tablets (160 mg each)	-	-	-	1	1½	2	2½	3	4
Adult Regular Strength tablets (325 mg each)	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1½	2
Adult Extra Strength tablets (500 mg each)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1

Some other important information about acetaminophen:

- **Brand names:** Tylenol®, FeverAll® (suppositories)
- **Medication forms:** Acetaminophen comes in tablet (pill), liquid, suppository, and dissolvable powder forms.
 - Dissolvable powder acetaminophen comes in 160 mg dissolve packs for children ages 6-11.
 - Acetaminophen also comes in 80, 120, 325, and 650 mg **suppositories** (pills inserted into the rectum that dissolve and release the medication. The rectal dose amount is the same as the oral (by mouth) dose. Suppositories may only be available at local drugstore pharmacies (not grocery store pharmacies).
 - Avoid any “extended release” acetaminophen products.

- **Dose frequency:** You can give your child a dose of acetaminophen every 4-6 hours as needed.
 - Don't give your child more than 5 doses a day, and never more than 3000 mg in a 24-hour period (which is the maximum amount for adults). Taking too much acetaminophen can put them at risk for liver damage or liver failure.
 - Acetaminophen can be found in many different prescription and over-the-counter medications. Read the labels to be sure your child is not getting it from 2 products. If you have questions, call your child's doctor.
 - Do not alternate giving your child acetaminophen and ibuprofen products unless their doctor has instructed you to.
- **Measuring the dose:** If you are giving your child liquid acetaminophen, measure the dose using a syringe or dropper. Do not use a teaspoon (since they are not as accurate).
 - If possible, use the syringe or dropper that comes with the medication. If not, medicine syringes are available at pharmacies.
 - If you must use a teaspoon, it should be a measuring spoon (not a regular spoon). 1 level teaspoon equals 5 ml and ½ teaspoon equals 2.5 ml.

Ibuprofen: Information and dose instructions

Ibuprofen is available over-the-counter (without a prescription) to treat your child's pain and fever. How much you should give your child depends on their weight. Find the correct dose by finding your child's weight and the type of ibuprofen medication you have in the table below.

- Abbreviations: mg = milligrams, ml = milliliters, tsp = teaspoons
- Dose charts are for US products only. Always doublecheck the medication strength if you buy the medication from outside the US.

Medication type	Your child's weight (in pounds)							
	12-17	18-23	24-35	36-47	48-59	60-71	72-95	96 or more
Total single dose amount (in mg)	50	75	100	150	200	250	300	400
Infant liquid (50 mg/1.25 ml)	1.25 ml	1.875 ml	2.5 ml	3.75 ml	-	-	-	-
Children's liquid (100 mg/5 ml)	2.5 ml	3.75 ml	5 ml	7.5 ml	10 ml	12.5 ml	15 ml	20 ml
Children's liquid (100 mg/1 tsp)	½ tsp	¾ tsp	1 tsp	1½ tsp	2 tsp	2½ tsp	3 tsp	4 tsp
Chewable Junior Strength tablets (100 mg each)	-	-	1	1½	2	2½	3	4
Junior Strength tablets (100 mg each)	-	-	-	-	2	2	3	4
Adult tablets (200 mg each)	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	2

Some other important information about ibuprofen:

- **Brand names:** Motrin®, Advil®
- **Medication forms:** Ibuprofen comes in tablet (pill) and liquid forms.
- **Dose frequency:** You can give your child a dose of ibuprofen every 6-8 hours as needed.
 - **Do not give ibuprofen to children under 6 months of age unless their doctor instructs you to.**
 - Do not give your child ibuprofen if they are at risk for dehydration (they're not drinking enough fluids, they're vomiting, they have diarrhea, or they're peeing a lot) or if they have kidney disease.
 - Never give your child more than 1200 mg of ibuprofen in a 24-hour period (which is the maximum amount for adults).

- Do not alternate giving your child acetaminophen and ibuprofen products unless their doctor has instructed you to.
- **Measuring the dose:** If you are giving your child liquid ibuprofen, measure the dose using a syringe or dropper. Do not use a teaspoon (since they are not as accurate).
 - If possible, use the syringe or dropper that comes with the medication. If not, medicine syringes are available at pharmacies.
 - If you must use a teaspoon, it should be a measuring spoon (not a regular spoon). 1 level teaspoon equals 5 ml and ½ teaspoon equals 2.5 ml.

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