

Fever

A fever is when a person's body temperature is over 38.0 °C. Normal temperature is between 36.5 °C and 38.0 °C.

Fever can cause sweating, shivering, muscle aches and a headache. Fever is a common symptom for children, and is usually caused by an infection.

Fever can be concerning for parents. However, it is usually more important to determine what is causing the fever rather than the temperature itself. Most fevers are **not** a sign of a serious disease.

How it spreads

Fever itself is not infectious and cannot be spread from person to person. However, the underlying infection that is causing the fever may be infectious. Viruses that cause fever spread from person to person via droplets containing the virus. People get infected by:

- breathing in droplets when an infected person breathes, coughs or sneezes on them or near them
- touching a surface contaminated with droplets – for example, hands, tissues, toys or eating utensils – and then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

Exclusion period

Exclude until the temperature remains normal, unless the fever has a known non-infectious cause.

If the child has gone home from the service with a fever but their temperature is normal the next morning, they can return to the service.

If the child wakes in the morning with a fever, they should stay home until their temperature remains normal.

If a doctor diagnoses the cause of the child's fever, follow the exclusion guidance for that disease.

Actions for educators and other staff

If you think a child has a fever, check their temperature. If their temperature is:

- between 37.5 °C and 37.9 °C – retest within 30 minutes
- 38.0 °C and over – notify a parent and ask them to pick up their child. Separate the child from the other children while waiting for their parent or carer to arrive.

Ensure staff and children have good respiratory and hand hygiene.

Ensure staff use appropriate cleaning practices, as described in the *Staying healthy* guidelines.

Actions for parents and carers

Keep your child at home until their temperature remains normal.

If your child is under 3 months and has a fever above 38.0 °C, take them to the doctor, even if they have no other symptoms.

All children with a temperature over 38.0 °C **and** any of the following symptoms should see a doctor right away:

- a stiff neck or light is hurting their eyes
- lethargic and not interested in interacting or participating in their usual activities
- vomiting and refusing to drink
- a rash, especially if accompanied by other concerning symptoms
- going to the toilet to pass urine less often or not at all (fewer wet nappies than usual in babies)
- pain that does not get better with pain relief medication
- have had any fever for more than 3 days and there is no obvious cause
- seems to be getting more sick.

Call 000 and ask for an ambulance if your child has a fever and any of the following symptoms:

- not responding to your voice
- having problems with breathing
- is pale and their hands and feet are cold to touch
- having a fit (febrile seizure) for the first time.

More information about fever

See healthdirect for more information on prevention, diagnosis and treatment of fever (healthdirect.gov.au/fever-and-high-temperature-in-children).

To find out if a child needs medical help:

- use the online symptom checker (healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker)
- speak to a registered nurse by calling the 24-hour health advice hotline on 1800 022 222.