

Feverish Illness in Children

Discharge advice for parents and carers of children younger than five years of age who have a fever

We think that your child is well enough to go home, however if your child develops any of the following symptoms or you are at all concerned, please telephone this number for further advice

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or take them toas soon as possible,

or in an emergency dial for an ambulance (999).

- your child's health gets worse
- your child has a fit
- your child develops a rash that does not disappear with pressure (see rashes and the tumbler test section)
- the fever lasts longer than five days
- you are concerned your child is dehydrated (see section below)
- you feel you are unable to look after your child at home

What to do when your child has a fever

- offer your child regular drinks (if you are breastfeeding then breast milk is best)
- check for signs that your child may be dehydrated (dry mouth, no tears, sunken eyes, sunken fontanelle – the soft spot on a baby's head). If you notice any of these signs seek further advice (see contact details)
- check your child for rashes and know how to look for and identify a non-blanching rash (a rash that does not disappear with pressure) as that could be a sign of serious illness (see rashes and the tumbler test section)
- check on your child regularly during the night
- use medicines only if your child is distressed or uncomfortable (see fever and medicines section)
- keep your child away from school or nursery while they have a fever and notify them of your child's absence
- return a urine sample if one has been requested, ideally within 24 hours

Fever and medicines

Fever is a natural and healthy response to infection, so do not try to reduce your child's fever by over or under dressing them, or by sponging them with water.

Although it is not necessary to treat fever, there are two medicines that can be used to treat distress caused by fever and being unwell. These are ibuprofen and paracetamol and they may make your child feel better. They are equally effective, so you should start with one and only use the other if the first has not worked.

Read the instructions carefully as these medicines come in different strengths, and they may also be contained in other products that your pharmacist sells. If you have any doubt you should tell the pharmacist what you are currently using. Although both are very safe when used correctly, they may be harmful if too large a dose is given or if given too often.

Rashes and the tumbler test



(Photo courtesy of the Meningitis Research Foundation)

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.

If the spots fade when the glass is rolled over them, the rash is probably not serious, but keep checking, it can develop into a rash that does not fade.

Rashes are harder to see on dark skin so look for rashes on paler areas, such as palms of the hands, soles of the feet, tummy and inside the eyelids.

If you are worried that your child's health is getting worse, seek further medical advice

Do not wait for a rash to appear.

This information is available in audio, Braille, large print and other languages. To request a copy, please ask a member of staff.

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