

Colour the Picture



Illustration: Eva Rigal

St. Anna
kinderSpital

My child
has a fever

Imprint

Produced on behalf of the
St. Anna Children's Hospital
www.stanna.at

Contact: Care Quality Development Team

Photos: Fotolia
Graphic Design: www.atelier-lev.com



St. Anna
kinderSpital

What is a fever?

What causes a fever?

How should I take my child's
temperature?

What should I do if my child
has a fever?

My child
has a fever



What is a fever?

A fever is an increase in the body temperature. It is the body's reaction to an illness and helps the body to combat infections.

The normal body temperature for children and young people is between 35.6° and 37.9°C. It depends on age (the older you are, the lower your temperature), the time of day (it is higher in the afternoon), physical exercise and the way in which it is measured (it is higher in the mouth, ear and forehead than under the arm).

What causes a fever?

In most cases, an increase in body temperature is caused by viral infections. It is rarely the sign of a serious illness.

A fever will not cause brain damage! A febrile convulsion will not cause brain damage either and only occurs rarely (4%) in the case of children between the ages of six months and five years. Usually febrile convulsions pass off harmlessly without any lasting damage but they must be clarified by a doctor.

How should I take my child's temperature?

There are various ways of taking your child's temperature. At present, we recommend traditional digital thermometers for measuring under the arm and infrared thermometers for use on your child's forehead. Always use the same method for taking your child's temperature. When you buy a thermometer, ask from which age it is suitable! Ask for a detailed explanation of how your thermometer is to be used. Always read the operating instructions for the thermometer as well!

What can you do for your child?

A fever is not an illness, but a natural and sensible defensive response by the body to an infection. This means that not every feverish infection should be treated in a way that reduces your child's temperature!

Whether your child's temperature should be reduced depends primarily on his general state of health. The most important thing is to observe your child's behaviour and increase his well-being. The crucial factor is not the reading on the thermometer but how your child seems and how he reacts.

- ▶ Encourage your child to drink.
Offer him more liquids.
- ▶ If your child is cold, cover him with a blanket.
- ▶ If your child is too hot, remove one of his blankets.
- ▶ Do not worry if your child eats less.
- ▶ Ensure that he is kept quiet.
- ▶ Keep your child at home instead of sending him to school or kindergarten.

When should I use medication to reduce my child's temperature?

If your child is coping well with the fever, if he is not in pain and has no particular underlying condition, his temperature does not need to be reduced. Only give medication to reduce his temperature (=antipyretics) if this will increase your child's well-being. **Antipyretics cannot prevent febrile convulsions!**

All medication to reduce your child's temperature requires a prescription. The dosage of medication to combat fever must be adjusted to the child's weight and not his age.



Medication can reduce your child's temperature by 1-2°C. It will be effective for 3-4 hours.

Do not give your child aspirin (=acetylsalicylic acid). It can trigger a serious illness in rare cases. If you have any uncertainties, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

When should I take a child with a high temperature to the doctor?

- ▶ If he is an infant of less than 3 months
- ▶ If he is very pale
- ▶ If his breathing is very rapid
- ▶ If his neck is stiff
- ▶ If he suffers from persistent vomiting and diarrhoea
- ▶ If your child stops drinking, particularly if he is a baby
- ▶ If he has a swollen joint, arm or leg
- ▶ If he is limping
- ▶ If your child complains of pain
- ▶ If his temperature stays high for more than 3 days
- ▶ If he has a rash
- ▶ If you are worried for any reason

If your child suffers convulsions, has difficulty breathing, is very sleepy or disoriented, call an ambulance (144) or the emergency medical service (141).