



# Fever

Use a digital thermometer to check your child's temperature; not a mercury thermometer. There are different kinds and uses of digital thermometers, including:

- Rectal: For children younger than 3 years, a rectal temperature is the most accurate.
- Forehead (temporal): Appropriate for children aged 3 months and older. If a child under 3 months has signs of illness, this can be used for a first pass. Your health provider may want to confirm with a rectal temperature.
- Ear (tympanic): Ear temperatures are accurate after 6 months of age, but not before.
- Armpit (axillary): This is the least reliable but may be used for a first pass to check a child of any age. The provider may want to confirm with a rectal temperature.
- Mouth (oral): Don't use a thermometer in your child's mouth until they are at least 4 years old.

Use the rectal thermometer with care. Follow the product maker's directions for correct use. Insert it gently. Label it and make sure it's not used in the mouth. It may pass on germs from the stool. If you don't feel OK using a rectal thermometer, ask your child's provider what type to use instead. When you talk with any provider about your child's fever, tell them which type of thermometer you used.

Below are guidelines to know if your young child has a fever. Your child's health care provider may give you different benchmarks for your child. Follow your provider's specific instructions.

Fever readings for a baby under 3 months old (confirm method with your child's provider):

- Rectal or forehead: 100.4°F (38°C) or higher
- Armpit: 99°F (37.2°C) or higher

Fever readings for a child 3 to 36 months:

- Rectal, forehead, or ear: 102°F (38.9°C) or higher
- Armpit: 101°F (38.3°C) or higher

Call your child's provider in these cases:

- Repeated temperature of 104°F (40°C) or higher in a child of any age
- Fever of 100.4° (38°C) or higher in baby younger than 3 months
- Fever that lasts more than 24 hours if under age 2, or more than 3 days if aged 2 or older

**Source:** The StayWell Company, LLC.

For more information, visit  
[cardinalglennon.com](https://www.cardinalglennon.com)

