

Information for Families about Caring for a Child with Fever

What is a fever?

A fever is a rise in body temperature above normal range. It is usually a sign that the body is fighting an infection. Most infections in children are caused by viruses. Fevers are also common after getting vaccines.

How do I measure my child's temperature?



- **Use a digital or glass thermometer to take your child's temperature.** The most accurate way to take their temperature is to insert the thermometer in the mouth or rectum.
- **DO NOT** use a glass thermometer that has mercury. The mercury can be poisonous to humans if the thermometer breaks.
- Using a thermometer under your child's armpit and/or using ear thermometers and forehead strips may underestimate your child's temperature. **How your child looks and how your child is behaving are more important than their temperature reading.**

What temperature is considered a fever?

- Any temperature higher than 38°C (100.4°F) is considered a fever.
- A higher than normal temperature is rarely harmful and does not always need to be treated. The main goal is ensuring your child is comfortable and behaving normally.

How can I help my child if they have a fever?



Non-medicine options

- Dress your child in a light layer of clothing. You can give them a light blanket if they have chills or are shivering.
- Encourage your child to drink extra liquids, such as water, throughout the day.
- Make sure the temperature of the room they are in is comfortable for them.



Medicine options

- Over-the-counter medicines, like children's acetaminophen (Tylenol, Tempra) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), can be used to relieve pain and discomfort in children related to fever.
- You do not need a prescription to get these medicines.
- **DO NOT** use Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid/ASA) or Aleve (naproxen sodium) to treat fever in children.

Important notes about giving fever medicine to your child:

- Medicines for pain and fever relief come in different concentrations. Please check the concentration of the bottle and follow labeling or prescription directions carefully. If you are not sure how to calculate a dose for your child, please contact your pharmacist or healthcare provider for help.
- Use a measuring device, such as a dosing syringe or cup, to give your child medicine.
- Be aware of other medicines that your child is taking alongside the acetaminophen (Tylenol, Tempra) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin). Make sure you know the ingredients of each medicine and that your total dose of acetaminophen or ibuprofen is within the recommended range.

Where can I find over-the-counter medicine, like children’s liquid Tylenol, to help my child?



Amid the current nation-wide shortage of over-the-counter liquid acetaminophen (Tylenol) for children, MGH is supporting community pharmacies in East Toronto by ensuring they have reliable emergency access to infant and children formulations of this medication where possible.

If your family needs infant or children’s liquid Tylenol for pain and fever relief, you may be able to find supply at one of our pharmacy partners. **Scan the QR code with your smartphone camera to see the full list of our pharmacy partners. You can also visit tehn.ca/PharmacyPartners.**

When should I go to a hospital emergency department if my child is sick?

- Your child is less than 3 months old *and* has a fever.
- Your child has had a fever for more than 5 days.
- Your child has difficulty breathing, a stiff neck, seizure and/or an area of pain or redness (with or without swelling or heat).
- Your child seems moderately to severely dehydrated (for example, decrease in amount of urine, no tears when crying, dry mouth and tongue).
- Your child looks very ill and/or is difficult to wake up, confused or delirious even after you treated the fever.
- Your child has a fever *and* a new rash that looks like a bruise.
- Your child has a fever *and* recently had cancer therapy.

Where else can I get help for my child if they have a fever?

If your family doctor is not available and your child does not need emergency care (as outlined in the above criteria), you can use one of the following resources in East Toronto:

Cold, Flu and COVID-19 Clinic for Kids (45 Overlea Blvd.)	Health Access Taylor-Massey (4 The Market Place)	Community Outreach Centre in Flemingdon Park (10 Gateway Blvd., Unit 100A)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See a doctor for cold, flu and COVID-19 assessment and access to cold, fever and pain medicines • Open to children and youth aged three months to 17 years by appointment • Book an appointment at tehn.ca/ColdFluClinic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See a doctor for cold, flu and COVID-19 assessment • Team includes nurse practitioners, mental health counsellors and others • Open to all ages by walk-in • See services and hours at ethp.ca/HATM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See a doctor for a cold, flu and COVID-19 assessment • Open to all ages by walk-in • See services and hours at tehn.ca/CommunityOutreachCentres

MGH Virtual Emergency Department	Health Connect Ontario
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same-day online video appointments to see a doctor • Open to people aged 3 months and older with urgent but non-life threatening health issue • Book an appointment at tehn.ca/VirtualED 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call 8-1-1 or visit healthconnectontario.health.gov.on.ca • Talk to a registered nurse and get health information • Available 24/7 in different languages