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HOW TO MEASURE A TEMPERATURE

Where should I put the thermometer?

There are several ways to measure body temperature. Taking the temperature in the rectum is the most accurate. Taking temperature by mouth or ear is accurate if done properly. Using the armpit is the least accurate. Which you use may depend on your child's age:

- With a baby less than 3 months old, a rectal temperature is preferred; it is more accurate.
- With a child less than 4 or 5 years old, you can get an idea of what your child's temperature is by doing an axillary (armpit) measure.
- For a child over 4 or 5 years old, take the temperature orally (by mouth).

How do I take a rectal temperature?

- Have your child lie stomach down.
- Put some petroleum jelly on the end of the thermometer and on the rectum (the opening of the anus.)
- Put the thermometer gently into the rectum about 1 inch. (If the child is less than 6 months old, put it in only about 1/4 to 1/2 inch.)
- Hold your child still. If you are using a glass thermometer, leave it in for 2 minutes. If you are using a digital thermometer, take it out when you hear the signal (usually a series of beeps).

Your child has a fever if the rectal temperature is over 100.4°F (38°C).

How do I take an axillary temperature?

- Put the tip of the thermometer in an armpit. Make sure the armpit is dry.
- Close the armpit by holding the elbow against the chest. If you are using a glass thermometer, leave it in for 4 to 5 minutes. If you are using a digital thermometer, take it out when you hear the signal (usually a series of beeps).

Your child has a fever if the axillary temperature is over 99.0°F (37.2°C). If you have any doubt, take your child's temperature rectally.

How do I take a temperature orally?

- Be sure your child has not had a cold or hot drink in the last 30 minutes.
- Put the tip of the thermometer under one side of the tongue and toward the back.
- Have your child hold the thermometer in place with his/her lips and fingers (not teeth). If you are using a glass thermometer, leave it in for 3 minutes. If you are using a digital thermometer, take it out when you hear the signal (usually a series of beeps).

Your child has a fever if the temperature is over 99.5°F (37.5°C) when taken by mouth.