

Thermometers and Fever

Choosing a thermometer

Digital thermometers

- Can be used in the mouth, rectum, or armpit
- Can be used for people of any age
- Are quick, easy to use and read

Ear thermometers (infrared thermometers)

- Small ear probe inserted gently into the ear canal
- Can be used for people of any age

Disposable thermometers

- Can be used for people of any age
- Can be used in the mouth or rectum
Never use a thermometer in the mouth if it has been used to take a rectal temperature – even if it has been cleaned!

Fever strips / pacifier thermometers / forehead thermometers

- Not as accurate as other types of thermometers

Glass thermometers containing mercury

- Do not use because mercury is toxic and can be released if the thermometer breaks.
- Do not throw it in the trash. Call your local Poison Control center for disposal instructions.

Fever

One way the body fights infection. A fever can lead to dehydration.

- Take acetaminophen* (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen* (Motrin®) for oral temperature greater than 101°F (38.3°C).
 - Do not give aspirin to anyone under 18 years of age.
 - Do not give acetaminophen* (Tylenol®) to persons with liver disease unless their health care provider prescribes it.

Tips for taking temperature:

- Never use a thermometer to take an oral temperature after it has been used to take a rectal temperature – even if it has been cleaned.
- Take a temperature at the same time of day since temperatures vary during the day.
- Choose a type of thermometer that is easy for you to use.
- Use a new disposable cover for each use; do not reuse disposable covers. If you don't have a cover, clean the thermometer after each use with cool, soapy water and let it dry.
- Do not take an oral temperature if the person has a stuffy nose. Use the rectum or armpit.
- Do not smoke or eat/drink anything hot or cold for 10 minutes before taking an oral temperature.

- For children under 2 years of age, ask your healthcare provider for products and dosage.
- A high fever (oral temperature greater than 104°F) can be dangerous.
 - Help the sick person drink cool liquids –especially water.
 - Place a cool cloth on the person's forehead.
 - Give a sponge bath with lukewarm water (just over body temperature - not cold water).
Re-check the sick person's temperature after 20 minutes.
 - Stop the sponge bath if the person gets chilled or starts shaking.

* Follow package instructions for dosage and intervals between doses.



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How to take a temperature

Oral temperature:

Recommended for anyone over 4 years of age.

- Use a disposable cover. Place the thermometer under the tongue, to one side of the center, and close the lips tightly around it.
- Follow thermometer instructions for how long to leave it in the mouth
- Remove and read thermometer
- Throw disposable cover in the trash; clean thermometer. Clean your hands.

Rectal temperature:

Recommended for children < 4 years of age or anyone who cannot hold a thermometer has a stuffy nose or cannot hold a thermometer safely in their mouth.

- Use a disposable cover. Apply a lubricant or petroleum jelly (e.g. Vaseline®) on the end of the thermometer so it can be inserted easily into the rectum.
- Turn babies or small children face down on your lap or on a flat, covered surface, such as a bed.
- Spread the buttocks with one hand and gently insert the thermometer end about ½ - 1” into the rectum with your other hand.
- Do not force the thermometer into the rectum. Hold it in place with two fingers close to the rectum (not near the end of the thermometer).
- Press the buttocks together to help keep the thermometer in place.
- Do not leave the child alone.
- Follow thermometer instructions for how long to leave it in the rectum.
- Remove and read the thermometer.
- Throw disposable cover in the trash; clean thermometer. Clean your hands.

Ear temperature:

- If probe is not clean, wipe gently with a dry cloth. Do not put in water.
- Use a disposable cover. Place probe in ear canal and turn thermometer on.

Infants less than 1 year of age:

- Pull the earlobe down and back.
- Center the probe tip in the ear and push gently inward toward the eardrum.

Children older than 1 year of age and adults:

- Pull the earlobe up and back.
- Center the probe tip in the ear and push gently toward the eardrum.
- Press button. Follow thermometer instructions for how long to leave it in the ear.
- Remove and read the thermometer.
- Throw disposable cover in the trash. Wipe the probe with a dry cloth and put away. Clean your hands.

Armpit (axillary) temperature:

- Place the tip of the thermometer in the center of the armpit.
- Press the arm against the body.
- Follow thermometer instructions for how long to leave it in the armpit.
- Remove and read the thermometer.
- Throw away the disposable cover, if used, or clean and dry the thermometer right away.

Normal body temperatures vary from person to person. Average body temperature is:

- Oral: 98.6°F (37°C)
- Rectal: 99.6°F (37.5°C)
- Ear: 99.6°F (37.5°C)
- Axillary: 97.6°F (36°C)

Body temperature is usually lowest in the morning and highest later in the day.