



KAISER PERMANENTE®

EMERGENCY  
DEPARTMENT

# Fever In Children

## After-Care Instructions

### General information

A fever is a rectal temperature of more than 100.4° F or an oral temperature above 99.8° F. Most fevers are due to viral infections, such as cold or flu. Having a fever by itself is not harmful. In fact, it helps the body fight infections. Children usually have higher fevers than adults do. Although high fevers make a child uncomfortable, it usually does not cause more problems. Most children will be less active when they have a fever. It is a good sign if your child is active, cheerful, and playing when the fever comes down.

### Caring for a fever after a visit to the Emergency Department

- Generally, if a child is comfortable, drinking fluids and playing, you do not need to treat the fever.
- Dress the child lightly. Do not wrap him or her in blankets.
- Encourage the child to drink extra liquids.
- If the child has a fever and is uncomfortable:
  - ✓ Give the child acetaminophen (Children's Tylenol™) or ibuprofen (Children's Advil™, Pediprofen™). Do not give either medicine more than every 4 hours, but you can alternate these medicines every two hours if the fever does not go down. Do not give aspirin to children or teens under age 20. If the child will not swallow medicine or is vomiting, use acetaminophen suppositories in the rectum.
  - ✓ Sponge the child with lukewarm water for 20 minutes. Do not use cold water, ice, or rubbing alcohol.

### When to call Kaiser Permanente

- If your child is 3 months to 3 years of age with a rectal temperature of 103° F or higher for more than 24 hours.
- If any fever has lasted more than 3 days.
- If the child has ear pain.
- If it is painful when the child urinates.
- If the child has joint pain or other unusual pain.

### When to return to an Emergency Department

- If the child cannot be comforted or will not wake up completely.
- If the child has a severe headache.
- If the child is breathing rapidly or has a difficult time breathing.
- If the child is drooling or has a hard time swallowing.
- If the child develops a dark red or purple rash.
- If an infant under three months of age has a rectal temperature of 101° F or higher.
- If a child with a fever seems sicker than you would expect with viral infections such as a cold or flu.
- If a child becomes delirious or has hallucinations.
- If the child has fever with stomach pain or vomiting and cannot hold down liquids or medication.

**If you think you have an emergency medical condition and you cannot safely go to a plan hospital, call 911 or go to the nearest hospital.**

**For information on this and over 180 other health topics, see your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise® Handbook*. If you need a copy, please call 1-800-464-4000.**

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