

# Caring for Children This Viral Season

Viruses like colds, the flu, RSV and COVID-19 can often be managed at home with over-the-counter medication. This guide is to help you care for an unwell child and know when to seek medical care.

## WHEN AND WHERE TO SEEK HELP

### Call 911 or go the Emergency Department when:

- You are worried your child is seriously ill
- Your infant, younger than 2 months old, has a fever
- Your child is struggling to breathe, such as sucking in between the ribs, above the breastbone or flaring of the nostrils
- You are concerned your child may be dehydrated (refusing to drink, no pee for 8 or more hours, or less for a baby)
- Child is not responding or less responsive, is very sleepy and difficult to wake, or not acting like themselves



### See your family doctor or a walk-clinic when:

- A fever lasts greater than 2 days
- Persistent cough that does not seem to be going away
- A fever goes away for a day or longer (without medication) and comes back within 24-48 hours
- An earache that lasts greater than 2 days



### Community Care Options

**Mississauga Paediatric Care Clinic:** Appointments available for children 6 months to 17-years-old. Book online at [summervillefht.com](http://summervillefht.com).

**Family Doctors, Walk-in Clinics or Virtual Care:** Visit [centralwesthealthline.ca](http://centralwesthealthline.ca) or [mississaugahaltonhealthline.ca](http://mississaugahaltonhealthline.ca).

**Health Connect Ontario:** For help in finding a family doctor or to chat with a nurse online or by phone. Dial 811 or visit [healthconnectontario.health.gov.on.ca](http://healthconnectontario.health.gov.on.ca).



### Caring for your sick child

- **Fever:** Treat fever or pain with over-the-counter medications such as Tylenol (acetaminophen) or Advil (ibuprofen) as directed.
- **Stuffy Nose:** Try saline drops or rinsing sprays, a humidifier or nasal aspirator (babies)
- **Cough:** Treat cough with a humidifier or steam from the shower. For a barking cough, cool outside air may help. Cough medicine is not recommended for children under the age of 6-years-old. If your child is older than one, 1 to 2 teaspoons of honey may help. Honey should never be given to babies less than 12-months due to risk of botulism.
- **Fluids:** Make sure your child gets lots of fluids. Breastmilk/formula is enough for babies. In children, popsicles, soups, and Pedialyte are good options in addition to water. If a child doesn't want to drink, small sips every 5-10 minutes by spoon or syringe can be helpful.

### How you can help prevent illness:

- Wear a mask in crowded indoor spaces
- Wash your hands often with soap and water; if not available use hand sanitizer
- Stay home when you are sick or if you can't wear a mask
- Cough and sneeze into your elbow
- Get your influenza and COVID vaccines

# FEVERS

## What is a Fever?

A fever can be a sign that the body is fighting an infection. Fevers are common in young, healthy children. In general, a fever is not harmful and can be managed at home. A high fever does not mean the child is sicker. A child who appears well, but has a high fever is less worrisome than a child who has a mild fever, but appears unwell and is less responsive.

**A temperature of 38°C (100.4°F) or higher is a fever.**

Age	Recommended Method	
Newborn - 2 years old	Most accurate: Rectal (in the bottom)	Alternative: Armpit
2-5 years old	Most accurate: Rectal	Alternative: Ear, Armpit
Older than 5 years	Most accurate: Mouth	Alternative: Ear, Armpit

Simple digital thermometers are best for measuring rectal, armpit and mouth temperatures. Ear thermometers are not accurate in very young children. Do not use forehead or pacifier thermometers because they are not reliable at any age.

## Managing a Fever

- Clothing should be light or one layer
- Offer extra fluids
- Avoid sponging. It does not lower a fever and may cool the child's outside body making them feel uncomfortable.
- Offer medication such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil/Motrin), which can be taken together or a few hours apart if needed. Do not use ASA (Aspirin) to treat fever. Store brands work just as well as brand name medications.
- For children 3 to 6 months of age, use acetaminophen only. Children over 6 months of age can have acetaminophen and/or ibuprofen, and they can be rotated as needed.



## Can't find children's medication or don't know how much to give?

Visit [thp.ca/emergency](http://thp.ca/emergency) or scan the QR code for more information, including dosing charts, and images to help determine if your child needs emergency care.



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