

## How to Choose a Thermometer & Take a Temperature

Fevers are not a disease but rather a symptom of a disorder. Fever is part of the body's natural defense against infection since viruses and bacteria flourish at normal body temperature. A sudden high fever can be a symptom of the flu. Because of the "germ-fighting" benefits of fever, medical opinions vary about when to treat a fever. Fevers in very young babies and persons with underlying health conditions can be serious. Ask your healthcare provider about when you need to be concerned about fever.

Getting an accurate temperature reading is one way to know whether you need to treat the fever or see your doctor. There are several types of thermometers available for home use. According to the American Medical Association, the most important thing is to choose a thermometer that is easy to use and read. Here are your options.

- **Digital oral, axillary or rectal**  
Digital thermometers are inexpensive and give readings quickly. They must be disinfected before each use so germs don't spread.
- **Tympanic ear thermometer**  
These are faster than regular digital thermometers and easy to use. Be careful to use it correctly and know that the results may not be accurate if the child has an ear infection or ear wax buildup. Also, to prevent the spread of germs, attach a new disposable probe cover before every use.
- **TemporalScanner™ thermometer**  
Used by 30 percent of pediatricians nationwide, the newest thermometer on the market is completely non-invasive and therefore the most gentle and sanitary. It takes only a couple of seconds to swipe the thermometer across the forehead to get an accurate reading.

Here's how to take an accurate temperature:

- Oral - Place under the tongue and close the mouth. Wait until the digital thermometer beeps. Remember not to take an oral temperature right after eating or drinking something because it will alter the results.
- Axillary - Place under the arm with the tip in the deepest crease. Wait until the digital thermometer beeps, approximately five minutes.
- Rectal - Use lubrication, such as petroleum jelly, and place tip in anal opening. Wait until the digital thermometer beeps. NOTE: This method may be used for infants or those whose temperature cannot be taken any other way.
- Tympanic - Pull top of earlobe up and back, place tip (covered with probe cover) in ear canal opening, press button until it beeps; Be sure you are pointing the probe into the ear canal opening and not at the wall of the ear, as this can result in incorrect results.
- Temporal Artery – Hold down the button the Exergen TemporalScanner™ and sweep the thermometer across the forehead from center to side. Release the button to read the

temperature. This thermometer is convenient for all ages and can even be used while the patient is sleeping.

Special tips for taking a child's temperature:

- Be patient when you are taking your child's temperature. She is already miserable; how you handle her while taking a temperature can add to her distress.
- Be sensitive to your child's age. An older child is less likely to be comfortable if you take his temperature rectally. A child with an earache may find a tympanic ear thermometer painful. A temporal artery thermometer, which gets a reading with a gentle swiping across the forehead, is a good option to keep on hand.
- Don't wake a sleeping child to take her temperature. Rest helps get the body better. (A temporal thermometer allows you to take her temperature without waking him.)
- Try not to take your child's temperature more than every two to three hours.
- If fever is accompanied by rash or a stiff neck, seek medical attention regardless of the temperature reading.