



# 12. Managing fever

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## Overview

- Fever is the body's reaction to infection. It is a raised body temperature which can be very uncomfortable, causing chills and shivering. In babies and young children, fever may be a sign of serious illness. A high fever can cause convulsions (violent shaking of the body) in young children. Fever can also cause the body to lose liquids and become dehydrated.
- The only way to confirm a fever is by checking the person's temperature with a thermometer. Fever is a temperature over 38° Celsius. If you do not have a thermometer to confirm fever it is important to look for other signs of raised body temperature. If other signs are present, we call it "suspected fever".

## What to do and how to do it

### *Assess the person*

1. If possible, check the person's temperature:
  - Or, if the person or family has checked the temperature with a thermometer, ask them what the result was
2. Look for other signs of raised body temperature such as:
  - Feeling too hot
  - Flushing (redness) of the skin
  - Complaints of feeling cold
  - Chills, shivering
  - Sweating
  - Headache
  - Weakness
  - Lethargy/feeling tired and unwell
3. Check the person's condition:
  - Ask about other symptoms, such as rash, headache, vomiting, cough or pain

### *Manage the fever*

1. If the fever is high or if the person has had convulsions, or if the person is a baby or small child, refer him or her to a health facility immediately.
2. If the person can drink, eat and move about:
  - Give him or her more fluids to drink than usual.
  - Encourage caregivers to breastfeed babies as much as possible.
  - Encourage carers to give nutritious food.
3. Cool the body down by:
  - Removing excess clothing.

- Wiping a sponge or a cloth soaked in tepid (lukewarm) water over the body and forehead.
  - Bathing babies in tepid water. Observe them closely for convulsions
  - Encourage rest.
4. If the fever does not go away or becomes worse, seek the help of a health professional.

### **Report symptoms**

In areas affected by an epidemic, fever can signal that a person has the disease in question.

- If fever is one of the symptoms of the disease (as in meningitis, malaria, or dengue), you should report cases as part of your community-based surveillance activities to the designated health authority. > Follow the actions indicated for prevention and management.
- If fever is one of the symptoms of the disease (as in meningitis, malaria, or dengue), but there is no community-based surveillance system in place, you should report cases to the nearest public health care facility. > If you are not sure where to report cases, discuss with your manager to find the best solution.



# Community messages



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02. Caring for a person with fever