

Take a Temperature



The flu can have a high fever; therefore, it is good to know how to measure your own and other's temperature. Although you may detect a fever when the skin is warm to the touch, you need to use a thermometer to get an accurate reading. A thermometer measures the temperature or degree of heat produced by the body.

Average body temperature is 98.6 °F, but it can vary 1 degree higher or lower. A temperature of about 100 °F is generally considered to be a fever.

The best ways to take a temperature with a digital thermometer are:

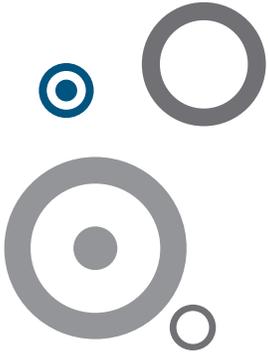
- oral (by mouth),
- axillary (under the arm), and
- rectal (in the bottom).

For an accurate reading, measure temperature as appropriate for the age range:

Age	Rectal (in the bottom)	Oral (in the mouth)	Axillary (under the arm)
Newborn to 3 months	X		
3 months to 3 years	X		X
4 to 5 years	X	X	X
5 years and older		X	X

Before use:

Clean the thermometer with soap and warm water or with rubbing alcohol and rinse.



Oral (in the mouth):

- Wait 15 minutes after drinking a hot or cold beverage.
- Turn on the digital thermometer.
- Place the thermometer tip in the mouth and under the tongue.
- Wait for the beep before removing the thermometer.
- Read the digital display.
- 99.5 °F or more is considered a fever when taken orally.

Axillary (under the arm):

- Turn on the digital thermometer.
- Place the tip in the armpit, against the skin.
- Hold the arm tightly against the chest to hold the thermometer in place.
- Wait for the beep before removing the thermometer.
- Read the digital display.
- 99 °F or more is considered a fever when taken under the arm.

Rectal (in the bottom):

- Put a small amount of lubricant or petroleum jelly on the tip of the thermometer.
- Place the child across your lap or on a firm surface. Steady the child with your hand on his or her lower back. Or, place the child face up, with the child's legs to their chest.
- Turn on the digital thermometer.
- Insert the thermometer ½ inch to 1 inch into the anal opening. Do not insert it too far – if you get resistance, STOP.
- Hold the thermometer in place with your 2 fingers.
- Wait for the beep before removing the thermometer.
- Read the digital display.
- 100.4 °F or more indicates a fever when taken rectally.
- Be sure to label the thermometer “for rectal use only.”

After use:

After using the thermometer, clean it again with soap and warm water or with rubbing alcohol and rinse.

***The *Healthwise Handbook* may be ordered at http://www.healthwise.org/f_bkorder.aspx or call 1-800-706-9646.

For more information about the flu, visit the Texas Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) website at texashelp.tamu.edu.

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