

Resources: Taking a Temperature

Why is it important to take my child's temperature?

A fever of 101°F (38.3°C) or higher in a child with sickle cell disease can be the first sign of a serious bacterial infection. Anytime your child looks or acts ill or feels warm use these guidelines to take their temperature.

What is the best way to take a temperature?

For **children less than two years old**, taking a rectal temperature is the best way to get an accurate temperature. Once **your child is six months old** you may also use an ear thermometer although it is not as accurate as a rectal temperature. For **children two years old and up**, you may take a temperature under the arm, however, this is not as accurate as taking a rectal or an oral temperature. For **children four years old and up**, taking a temperature by mouth (oral) is the best way to get an accurate temperature.

How to take a rectal temperature:



- Have your child lie stomach down on your lap.
- Put petroleum jelly on the end of the thermometer and on the rectum (opening of anus).
- Gently put the thermometer into the the rectum about one inch (1/4 to 1/2 of inch if the child is less than 6 mos. old).
- Hold your child still until the thermometer signals that it is done (most beep or signal when they are done).

How to take an under arm temperature:

- Make sure that the area is dry first and put the tip of the thermometer under your child's arm in the armpit.
- Close the thermometer in the armpit by holding the elbow tightly against the chest until the thermometer signals it is done.



How to take an oral temperature:



- Make sure your child has not had anything hot or cold to drink in the last 30 minutes.
- Put the tip of the thermometer under one side of the tongue and toward the back of the mouth. It is important that you put the thermometer in correctly in order to get an accurate reading.
- Have your child hold the thermometer in place with their lips and fingers (not their teeth) until the thermometer signals that it is done.

What should I do if my child has a fever?

If your child has a fever of 101°F (38.3°C) or higher, **call your child's health care provider immediately and plan to bring your child to the Emergency Department right away.**

312-227-4813 (M-F 9am to 5pm)

312-227-4000 (After hours, ask for hematologist on call)

The Comprehensive Sickle Cell Program

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