

Taking a Temperature

Getting an accurate temperature can take some practice. Of the kinds of temperatures you can take, rectal temperatures are the most accurate. Oral temperatures (in the mouth) are also accurate if they are done properly. Ear temperatures can vary in accuracy due to things such as ear wax or the technique used in taking an ear temperature. Taking a temperature at the armpit is the least accurate. For a child younger than five years old, a rectal temperature is best. For anyone older than five years old, it's usually best to take his or her temperature by mouth.

There are generally two kinds of thermometers:

- ❖ Digital Thermometer

A digital thermometer records temperatures with a heat sensor and runs on a button battery. Digital thermometers can measure a temperature quickly, usually less than 30 seconds. The temperature is displayed in numbers on the screen.

- ❖ Glass Thermometer

With a glass thermometer, you must shake it until the mercury line is below 98.6° F (37° C). To read a glass thermometer, find where the mercury line ends by turning the thermometer until you can see the mercury line.

Taking Rectal Temperatures (children age 5 and under)

Have the child lie down on your lap with stomach down. Apply some petroleum jelly to the end of the thermometer and to the opening of the anus. Then insert thermometer into the rectum about one inch, but do not force it in. Hold the child still while the thermometer is in and leave the thermometer in the child's rectum for two minutes (or until a digital thermometer signals that it has an accurate reading).

If the rectal temperature is over 100.4° F (38.0° C) the child has a fever.

Taking Oral Temperatures (children over age 5 and adults)

Make sure the sick person has not had a drink - cold or hot - within the last 10 minutes. Place the tip of the thermometer under the tongue and toward the back. Hold the thermometer in place with lips and fingers (not teeth) and breathe through the nose, keeping the mouth closed. Leave it inside the mouth for three minutes (or until a digital thermometer signals that it has an accurate reading). If the mouth cannot close because of a stuffy nose, clean the nose out before taking the temperature.

If the oral temperature is over 99.5° F (37.5° C) the person has a fever.

Taking Oral Temperature with a Digital Electronic Pacifier Thermometer (infants and toddlers)

With a pacifier thermometer, have the child suck on the pacifier until it reaches a steady state and you hear a beep. This usually takes three to four minutes.

If the temperature is over 100°F (37.8°) the child has a fever.

Taking Ear Temperatures

If a sick child has been outdoors on a cold day, make sure he/she has been inside for at least 15 minutes before taking the temperature. Pull the ear backward to straighten the ear canal. Place the end of the ear thermometer into the ear canal and aim the probe toward the eye on the opposite side of the head. Then press the button. In about two seconds you can read the temperature on the digital display.

If the temperature is over 100.4°F (38°C), the child has a fever