

Thermometers 101: How to check temperature during COVID-19 pandemic

November 1, 2020

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Article type: [Parent Plus](#)

Topics: [COVID-19](#), [Infectious Diseases](#), [Patient Education/Patient Safety/Public Education](#), [Public Health](#)



During the COVID-19 pandemic, you may have to check your child's temperature before he or she goes to school or activities. Feeling your child's forehead is quick but is not an exact method. Using a digital thermometer is the best way to know if your child has a fever.

A normal temperature for a child ranges from 97 degrees Fahrenheit (F) to 100.4 degrees F. A fever is a temperature of 100.4 degrees F or higher on a digital thermometer.

There are several types of digital thermometers:

- A digital forehead (temporal) thermometer uses infrared light to measure the temperature under the skin on the forehead. Most newer models don't have to touch the forehead. Schools and other groups may use them to reduce the risk of spreading germs.
- A digital thermometer with a metal probe measures temperature either in the mouth (oral thermometer) or anus (rectal thermometer).
- A digital ear (tympanic) thermometer uses infrared light to measure temperature inside the ear.

Here are tips from the American Academy of Pediatrics for taking a child's temperature.

Forehead temperature

- Forehead thermometers can be used on children of any age.
- Follow the instructions on the package for how to aim the sensor across your child's forehead.
- Read your child's temperature on the digital display screen.
- Using forehead thermometers outside in direct sunlight may affect readings.

Rectal temperature

- Rectal thermometers give the best reading for infants under 3 months of age.
- Insert the rectal thermometers into the anal opening. For directions, see "[How to Take a Child's Temperature](https://bit.ly/2RISN8W)" at <https://bit.ly/2RISN8W>.

Mouth temperature

- Once your child is 4 years old, you can use a mouth thermometer.
- If your child drank something hot or cold, wait 30 minutes.
- Place the metal tip of a digital oral thermometer under the tongue toward the back of your child's mouth. Hold in place until you hear a beep.

Ear temperature

- Ear thermometers can be used on children 6 months of age and older.
- Pull the ear back and place the digital ear thermometer in the ear canal. Aim the tip of the ear probe between the opposite eye and ear.

Using a digital thermometer under the arm, fever strips and pacifier thermometers are not as accurate.

When to call the pediatrician

A fever is a sign that your child's body is fighting an infection. Call your pediatrician if your child seems to be getting worse, if his or her temperature is over 104 degrees F or if the child is younger than 3 months and has a temperature of 100.4 degrees F or higher.

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