

# Information for families and caregivers on children's fever and pain medication

## WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR CHILD HAS A FEVER

This tip sheet was developed in collaboration with health-care providers to offer guidance on when and how to use fever and pain medication, and when you should speak with a health-care professional for advice.



### WHAT IS A FEVER?

- A fever is a rise in body temperature above normal range.
- It is usually a sign that the body is fighting an infection.
- A fever itself is generally harmless and possibly even helpful.
- Fevers don't always need to be treated.
- To learn more, please see "[Fever and temperature-taking](#)" from the Canadian Paediatric Society.



**Your trusted health-care provider can help decide if taking medicine is recommended.**

Method	Normal temperature range
Rectum	36.6°C to 37.9°C (97.9°F to 100.2°F)
Mouth	35.5°C to 37.5°C (95.9°F to 99.5°F)
Armpit	36.5°C to 37.5°C (97.8°F to 99.5°F)
Ear	35.8°C to 37.9°C (96.4°F to 100.2°F)



### HOW CAN I HELP A CHILD WITH A FEVER AND/OR PAIN?

When a child is sick, one of the main goals is to relieve discomfort and promote rest. Treating a fever does not impact the length of time you are sick.



You may use **acetaminophen** or **ibuprofen** when an infant or child is in pain or is uncomfortable because of a fever.



### WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THESE DRUGS?

**Acetaminophen** and **ibuprofen** both help to manage fever and pain, but they work in the body differently.

**Ibuprofen** will also help to reduce swelling, bruising, redness and pain/tenderness related to these symptoms following an injury.



Canadian Pharmacists Association  
Association des pharmaciens du Canada



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## HOW TO USE THESE MEDICINES WISELY

### WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I NEED TO USE ACETAMINOPHEN OR IBUPROFEN?



Your pharmacist can help you choose the right formulation for an infant or child's needs based on what products are available.



It is best to use a pediatric measuring cup, spoon or syringe to give liquid medications to children.



These drugs come in a variety of dosage forms, such as liquids, chewable tablets and rectal suppositories.



- These different formulations will vary in strength.
- Always refer to the package for product-specific dosing instructions or speak with a pharmacist to ensure a safe dose is being given.
- In some cases, tablets that are used for adults can be modified for children with caution depending on the child's age, size, and ability to swallow solid medications (e.g., tablets can be split).

**Always talk to a health-care provider to discuss what options are appropriate and safe for your child.**

### WHAT SHOULD I NOT DO?



Do not give more than the maximum number of doses per day as noted on the medication package.



Do not use aspirin (acetylsalicylic or ASA) to treat a child's fever as it can increase the risk of a serious illness called Reye's Syndrome when used during various viral infections.



### WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MAKE SURE ALL CHILDREN AND CAREGIVERS HAVE ACCESS TO THESE MEDICINES?

- Do not buy more product than you need (i.e., large quantities); this will help share the available supply so those who require medicine will be able to find it when they need it.
- Speak to a pharmacist about safe and accessible options that are best suited for your individual needs.

*This information is provided for educational and informational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Please speak with a trusted health-care provider if you have questions or concerns about the health needs of any infant or child.*