

## **Fever: Care for your baby under 2 months old**

### **What is a fever?**

A fever means that the body temperature is above 100.4°F (38.0°C). It can be caused by many things.

A baby under 2 months old with a fever needs to be seen by a health care provider. You should call your doctor or go the Emergency Department (ED) for your baby to be seen. An exam needs to be done to look for an infection.

It is important to take your baby's temperature in their bottom (rectum), if you think they are warm or not feeling well. This is called the rectal temperature.



### **What may need to be done?**

Infections in babies less than 2 months old can be serious. Tests often need to be done to check for infections in different areas of the body.

### **Tests**

Tests will be done to check for infection. You will get the results of those tests while you are in the ED. Another test, called a culture is sent to the lab to see if bacteria grow. It takes 2 or 3 days to get the culture results.

- **Blood test.** A small amount of blood is taken from your baby's hand, arm or foot.
- **Urine test.** A tiny soft tube is put into the opening where your baby pees. The opening is called the urethra. The tip of the tube goes up into your baby's bladder to get some urine. The tube is taken out after staff gets the urine for the test.
- **Spinal Tap test.** A procedure to get a small sample of the fluid that is around your baby's spine and brain. This is called cerebrospinal fluid (CSF). The spinal tap is done to see if there are bacteria in the fluid, which can cause a serious illness called meningitis. To do the test, a small needle is put into the lower part of your baby's back. The needle does not go into the spinal cord. It is taken out after the tap is done. It is important to know that **your baby may not need this test.**

### **Chest x-ray**

An X-ray is a picture that can show if there is a lung infection. If your baby has breathing problems, an X-ray may be taken. If your baby does not have breathing problems, an X-ray may not be needed.

## **What happens next?**

The results of all the tests that are done today will be reviewed by the ED doctor. Some babies may need to be admitted to the hospital.

### **Babies that are admitted**

Your baby will be admitted to the hospital if:

- Your baby is less than 28 days old, or is older than 28 days old and has abnormal test results. This may mean there is a serious infection.
- The ED doctor is worried that there may be a serious infection or your baby looks ill.

Your baby will:

- Stay in the hospital for at least 36 hours.
- Be given antibiotics through an IV to treat infection until it is known if your baby has an infection or not. An IV is a “Small straw that is inserted into a blood vessel”

### **Babies that can be cared for at home**

- Babies that are older than 28 days have normal test results, and the doctor feels is well enough to be cared for at home can often go home. The ED doctor feels your baby does not have a serious infection.
- Your baby will need to see their normal doctor the next day to be checked again while waiting for the culture results.

## **How should I care for my baby with a fever at home?**

- Feed your baby like normal.
- Treat your baby’s fever as you were told. You can give acetaminophen every 4 to 6 hours over the next 2 days if needed.
- Call to follow up with your baby's doctor tomorrow. If you cannot follow up with your baby’s doctor tomorrow, you should return to the ED if you are concerned about your baby still being ill.
- A nurse from the ED will call you to see how your baby is doing and talk to you about test results.

**ALERT:** Call your baby’s doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your baby:

- Is more sleepy or fussy than normal.
- Is feeding poorly.
- Throws up their feedings.
- Seems to be getting sicker.
- Has special health care needs that were not covered by this information

**Before calling your doctor, check your baby's rectal temperature.**

**This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.**