

Fever in adults



Fever is a natural reaction of the immune system to ward off pathogens. It usually occurs in three phases and disappears by itself after 2-3 days.

When do we talk about fever?

- 37.5 – 38.0°C = Slightly elevated body temperature
- 38.1 – 38.5°C = Mild fever
- 38.6 – 39.0°C = Moderate fever
- 39.1 – 39.9°C = High fever
- 40.0 – 42.0°C = Very high fever

Fever phases and what you can do yourself to relieve fever.

Fever usually occurs in three phases and can last from a few hours to several days.

1) Increase in fever: The fever rises to a certain temperature.

- Common symptoms: Chills, shivering, cold and pale skin.
- Measures: If cold, the body should be kept warm, e.g. by turning up the room temperature, covering up, wearing warm clothing and drinking hot drinks.

2) Peak fever: The temperature reached is maintained.

- Common symptoms: Hot, very red, dry skin and glassy eyes, aching limbs, headaches and loss of appetite.
- Measures: If you feel very hot, wear loose clothing, remove blankets, drink cool drinks, lower the room temperature, allow fresh air in but avoid draughts. Lukewarm leg compresses or vinegar socks have a fever-reducing effect (application for max. 10-20 minutes).

3) Drop in temperature: The fever drops back to normal temperature.

- Common symptoms: Hot and sweaty skin and perspiration.
- Measures: Change bed linen and clothing if necessary, wash yourself with cool or lukewarm water, dry the skin well.

In general:

- Drink enough (1.5-2 litres a day).
- Stay in bed and try to get plenty of sleep.
- If you have a high temperature, medication can help to lower your body temperature. Antipyretic or pain-relieving medication should only be taken in consultation with a doctor.

Did your doctor's office just close?

As a rule, it is fine to call on the next working day.

Are you unsure? Then call 1450, the telephone health counselling service.

You can find more information and sources at www.wobinichrichtig.at.



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When should medical advice be sought?

Contact a doctor in the following cases:

- very high fever.
- fever that lasts longer than three days.
- fever that occurs intermittently and repeatedly.
- fever that does not go down despite antipyretic measures.

When should medical advice be sought immediately?

Seek medical help immediately if:

fever is accompanied by:

- an altered state of consciousness.
- a stiff neck.
- skin rashes.
- heart palpitations.
- shortness of breath/difficulty breathing.

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