

Where **kids** come first

When to go to  
the Emergency Room  
with your child



L'Hôpital de Montréal pour enfants  
The Montreal Children's Hospital

Centre universitaire de santé McGill  
McGill University Health Centre

You are the best judge of the condition of your child's health. However, it can be difficult to figure out how sick your child is and how to know if you should take him to the Emergency Room. Fortunately, there are signs to look for to help you decide.

### **Listen to and watch your child for the following signs**

Consider seeking medical advice if you answer **“YES”** to any of the following questions:

- **Skin colour:** Is your child's skin colour paler than normal?
- **Hydration:** Does your child have a dry mouth (i.e. no saliva in his mouth)? Does your child have no tears when he cries? Is your child urinating less frequently?
- **Breathing:** Does your child have difficulty breathing? Have there been changes in your child's breathing patterns?
- **Reactions:** Does your child show signs of listlessness, tiredness and/or irritability? Has there been a change in the way your child responds to you? Has there been a change in your child's response to noise and/or visual stimulation?



## If your child has a fever:

If your child has an infection (caused by either bacteria or a virus), it is common to have a fever too. Fever is not dangerous to your child regardless of how high his temperature is. How your child is acting is a better indicator of how sick your child is.

If your baby is younger than three months old and has a fever, you should consult your doctor. Children older than three months can be treated at home as long as their appearance, hydration, breathing and responses are appropriate (see previous section). However, if the fever lasts for more than 48-72 hours your child should be seen by his doctor.

Consult a doctor or health care provider if your child:

- is less than three months old and has a fever.
- has a fever for more than 48-72 hours.
- is excessively cranky, fussy or irritable.
- is excessively sleepy, lacking energy or does not respond.
- is continually wheezing or having difficulty breathing.

There are two types of medications recommended when your child has fever. These medications are used to relieve the aches and pains associated with fever and are not an absolute requirement.

- 1. Acetaminophen** (such as Tylenol® or Tempra®)
- 2. Ibuprofen** (such as Advil® and Motrin®)

For all medications, make sure to follow the directions on the package. Do not give acetaminophen and ibuprofen at the same time. Do not give aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) to children who have a fever.



This information was prepared by the Emergency Department of The Montreal Children's Hospital of the McGill University Health Centre.

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