

How to Take a Baby's Temperature

There are many ways to take a baby's temperature. The two best ways to take a baby's temperature are the rectal (in the bottom) and axillary (armpit) methods.

Axillary Method (Armpit)



- Step 1:** Choose a digital thermometer.
- Step 2:** Clean and dry the baby's armpit.
- Step 3:** Place the thermometer under the baby's arm and hold the arm down.
- Step 4:** Hold the thermometer in place for 3 to 5 minutes or until it beeps.
- Step 5:** Read the thermometer. (Normal armpit temperature is 97.8° F.)
- Step 6:** Wash the thermometer with soap and water after every use.

Rectal Method (In the bottom)

- Step 1:** Choose a digital thermometer.
- Step 2:** Clean the thermometer with soap and water.
Rinse with cool water.
- Step 3:** Dab Vaseline or K-Y jelly on the tip of the thermometer for easy insertion.
- Step 4:** Lie the baby facedown on a firm, sturdy surface or across your lap.
- Step 5:** Separate the baby's bottom and insert the thermometer gently. Be careful not to insert it too far; insert it just until the silver tip is fully covered.
- Step 6:** Hold the baby's bottom with your hand, placing the thermometer between your fingers. Stay in this place for 2 to 3 minutes or until the digital thermometer beeps.
- Step 7:** Remove the thermometer gently and read. (Normal rectal temperature ranges between 97.6° and 100° F.)
- Step 8:** Wash the thermometer with soap and water after every use.



Tips & Warnings

- **Call the baby's doctor if the temperature is greater than 100 degrees F.**
- If the temperature under the arm is over 98.6 degrees F, take the temperature rectally to ensure a proper reading.
- Talk to your baby's doctor to see which way he wants the baby's temperature taken and ask at what temperature you should call him.
- Take your baby's temperature using the rectal or axillary method until age 4, or until the child is helpful enough to hold the thermometer firmly in place under the tongue.
- Have someone else hold the baby while you hold the thermometer.
- Pick up the baby and give him or her a nice long hug to secure the thermometer or lie on the bed with the baby so the thermometer is secure under her arm.
- Wash the thermometer with soap and water after every use.
- Ear thermometers, thermometer strips and pacifier type thermometers are not accurate and should not be used. **Mercury thermometers should never be used.**
- Do not give Tylenol, Ibuprofen and other fever reducing medications without talking to your baby's doctor. Aspirin should not be given to children under 18 years of age.