

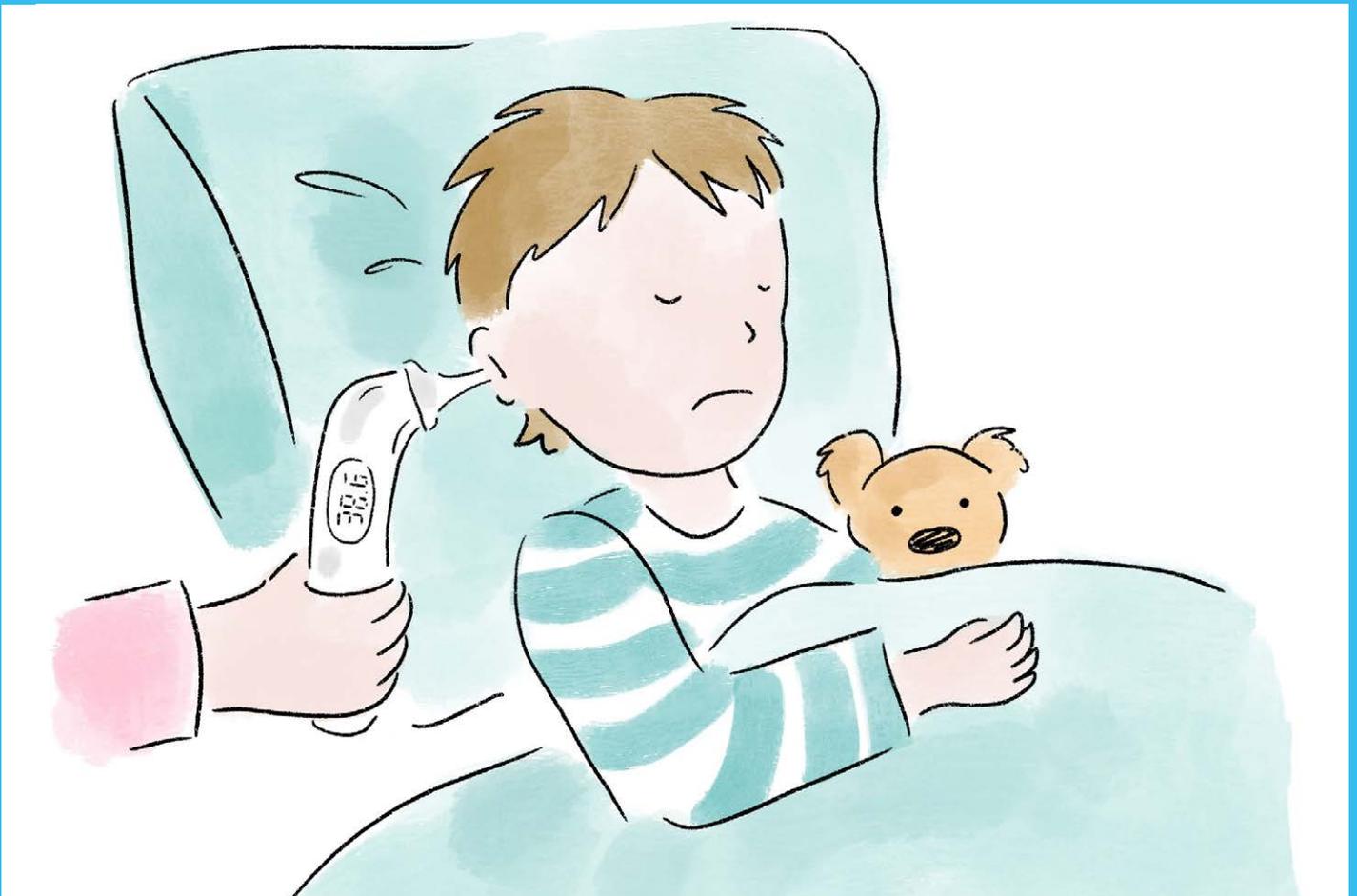
# Fever

## Information for parents and carers

### Key facts

Fever (a high temperature) is common in children. Fever usually means your child has an underlying infection. Fever itself is not harmful, it is part of the body's natural defenses against infection.

While fevers are concerning for parents, doctors are usually more concerned about what is causing the fever. It is important for you to monitor any symptoms of underlying illness.



# Symptoms



**High temperature**  
38°C on thermometer



**Vomiting**



**Irritable or crying**



**Sleepiness**



**Shivering**



**Hot to touch**



**Refuse food**



**General aches  
and pains**



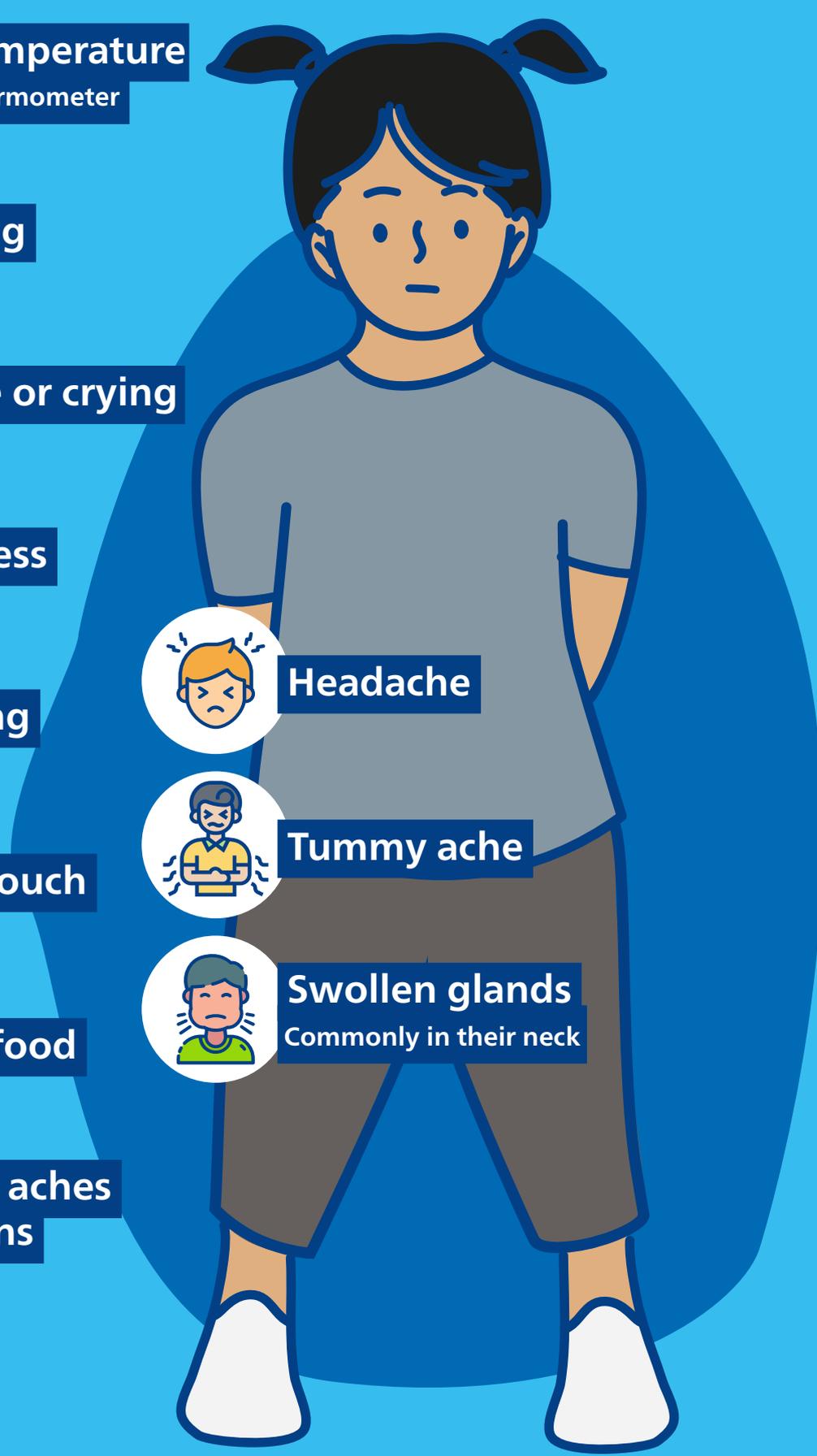
**Headache**



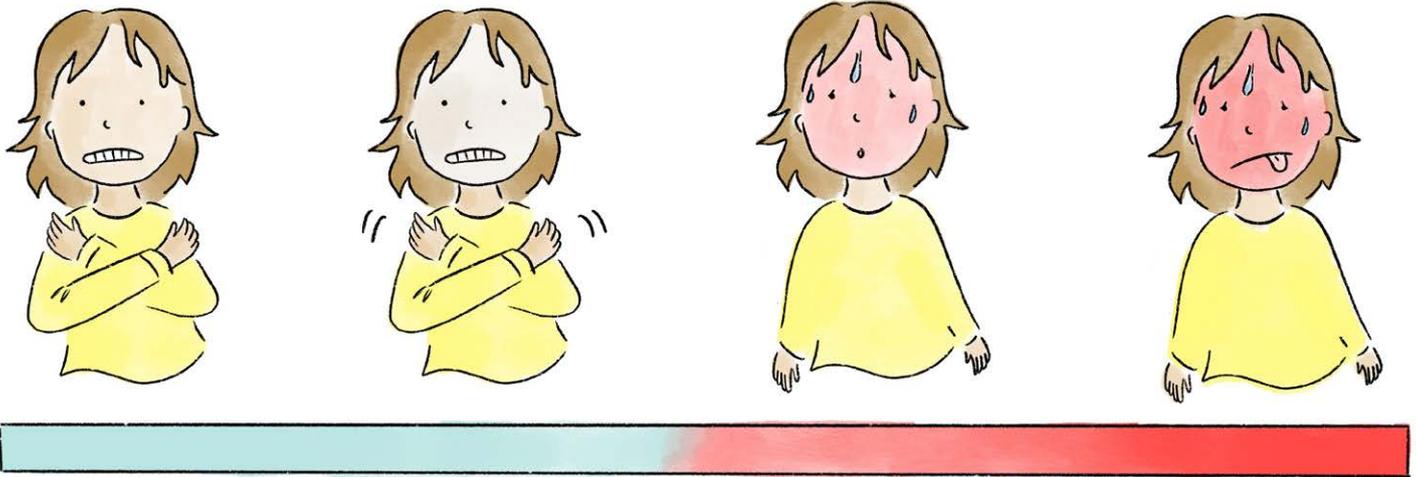
**Tummy ache**



**Swollen glands**  
Commonly in their neck



Fever associated with common, self-limiting viral infections rises and falls over a total of 12-48 hours. Children often complain of feeling cold at the start of a fever. They may look pale and feel shivery, yet will feel hot and dry to touch. Later they often say they feel hot, and will be sweaty and flushed.



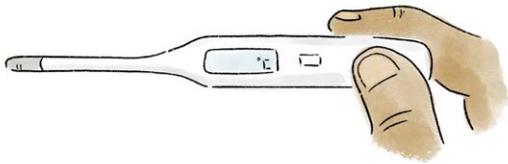
**If your baby is under 3 months and has a fever above 38°C, then you should see a doctor, even if they have no other symptoms.**

# How to measure a temperature

There are a number of ways you can take a child's temperature.

- Electronic thermometer placed in the axilla
- Infra-red tympanic thermometer

## How to take an armpit (axillary) temperature



1 Turn on thermometer



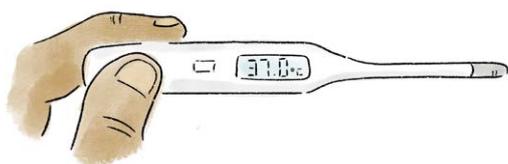
2 Make sure the armpit is dry.



3 Put the tip of the thermometer in an armpit



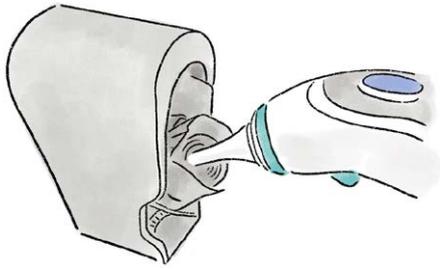
4 Close the armpit by holding the elbow against the chest. The tip of the thermometer must stay covered by skin.



5 Do this until it beeps (about 10 seconds) and read the temperature on the screen

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# How to take an ear (tympanic) temperature



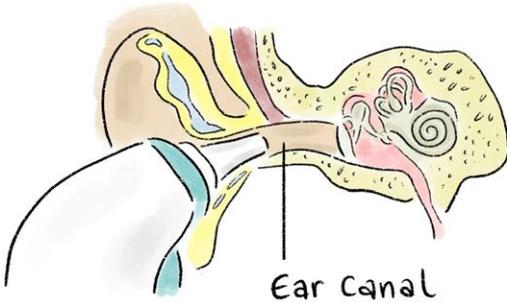
1 Attach the probe tip to the thermometer



2 Turn on thermometer



3 Gently pull back the ear upwards and backwards



4 Insert thermometer until the ear canal is fully sealed off



5 Hold the button down until it beeps

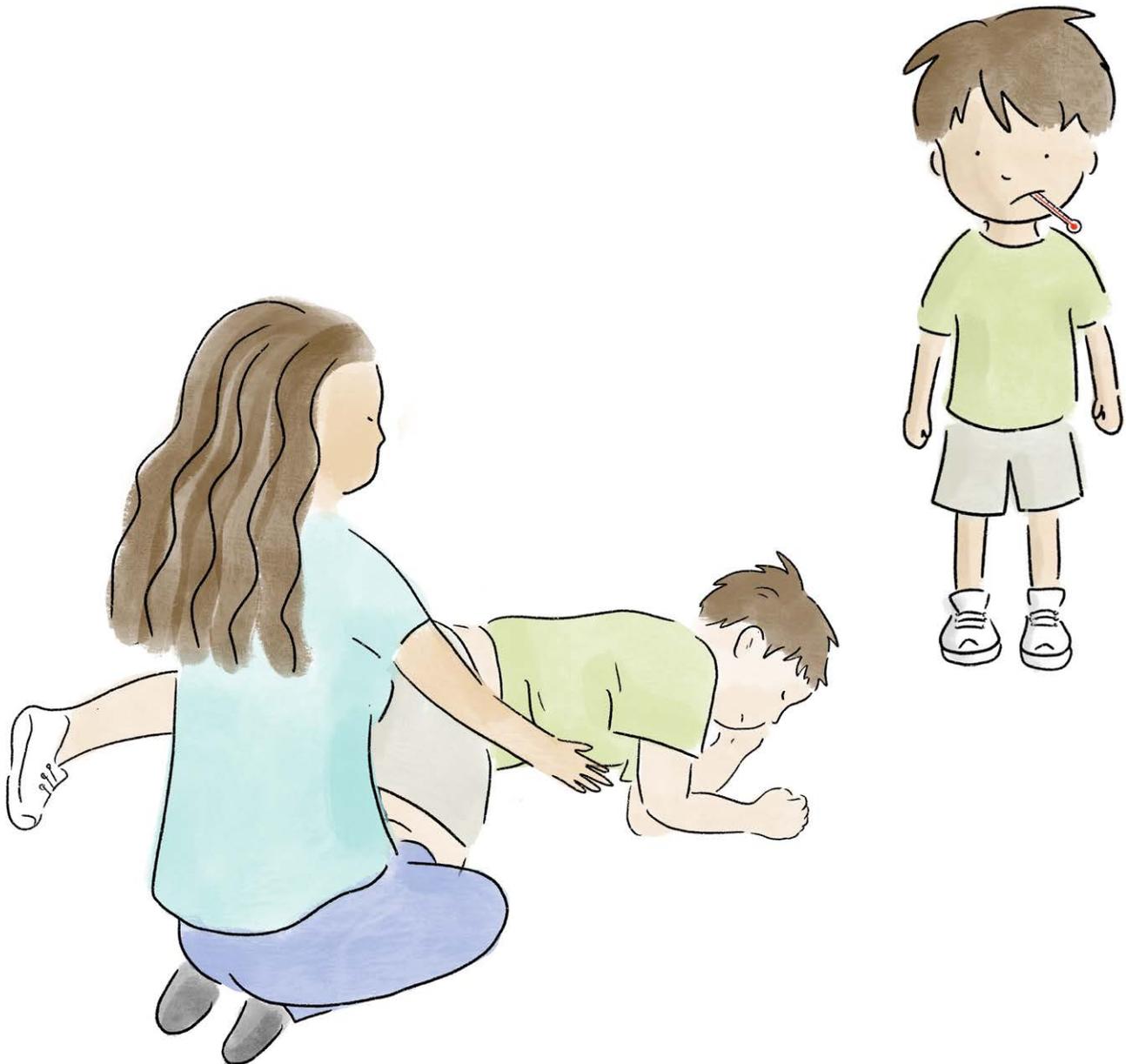


6 Remove thermometer and read the temperature

# Febrile seizures

Some children can have seizures (a 'fit') when they have a fever, these are known as febrile seizures. Your child may have a febrile seizure if their temperature goes up suddenly. Sometimes, a seizure happens when parents don't know their child has a fever. Febrile seizures are common and do not usually cause any longterm health effects.

Febrile convulsions, and seizures due to infections such as meningitis, can look very similar. If a child has a seizure for the first time, it is important to rule out serious conditions such as meningitis.



# Caring for your child at home

Most of the infections that cause fevers are caused by viruses. A few are caused by bacteria, which are treated with antibiotics. Antibiotics do not work on viruses.

Lowering your child's fever will not help to treat the underlying illness more quickly.

If your child seems well and is happy, there is no need to treat a fever.

## Pain or distress

If your child is in pain or distressed and over 3 months old, you can give them liquid paracetamol or ibuprofen.

At home, we do not recommend giving paracetamol and ibuprofen at the same time. If your child has not improved after two to three hours you may want to give them the other medicine.

These medicines do not treat the cause of the fever – they do help to ease discomfort. You do not need to use these medicines if your child is comfortable and not distressed by the fever, aches or pains.

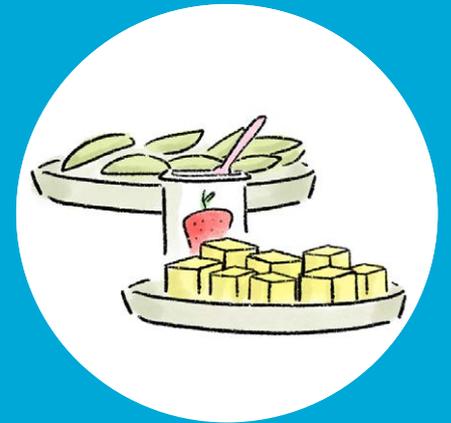


If your child is miserable, there are things you can do to help them feel more comfortable;

**1** Give your child smaller amounts of fluid, more often



**2** Many children refuse to eat when they have a fever. This is not a problem, as long as they stay hydrated. Offer small snacks



**3** If your breastfed child is younger than 6 months, offer extra breastfeeds



**4** If your formula-fed child is younger than 6 months, offer the usual amount of formula



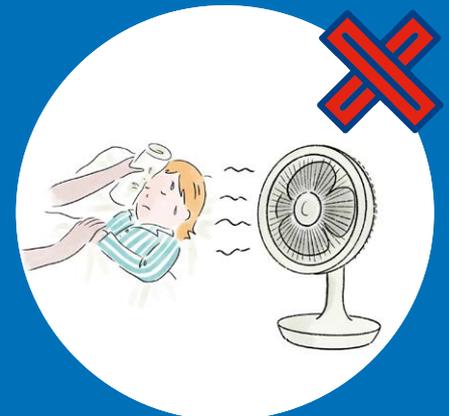
**5** If your child is older than 6 months, keep breast or bottle feeding. You can also offer your child water or oral rehydration solutions.



**6** Dress your child in enough clothing so that they are not too hot or cold.



**7** Do not try to control your child's temperature with tepid sponging or fans



**8** If a rash appears do the 'glass test'



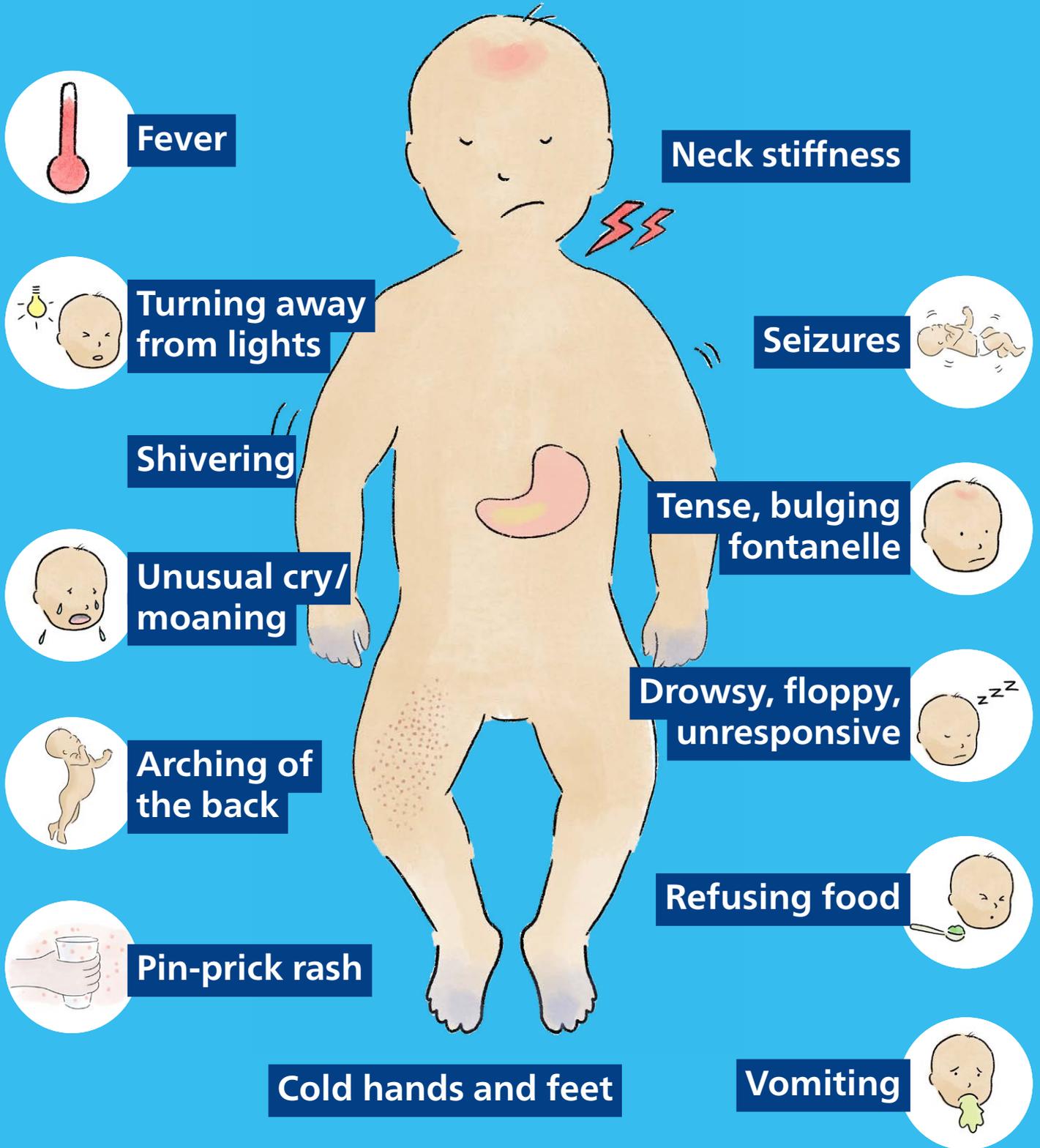
**Watch your child for signs that their illness is getting worse.**

# The Glass Test

Do the 'glass test' if your child has a rash. Press a glass tumbler firmly against the rash. If you can see the spots through the glass and they do not fade as you press the glass onto the skin then this is called a 'non-blanching rash'. If you see this type of rash seek medical advice immediately. The rash is harder to see on dark skin so check paler areas, such as palms of the hands, soles of the feet and tummy.



# Meningitis in Babies



Fever

Neck stiffness

Turning away from lights

Seizures

Shivering

Tense, bulging fontanelle

Unusual cry/ moaning

Drowsy, floppy, unresponsive

Arching of the back

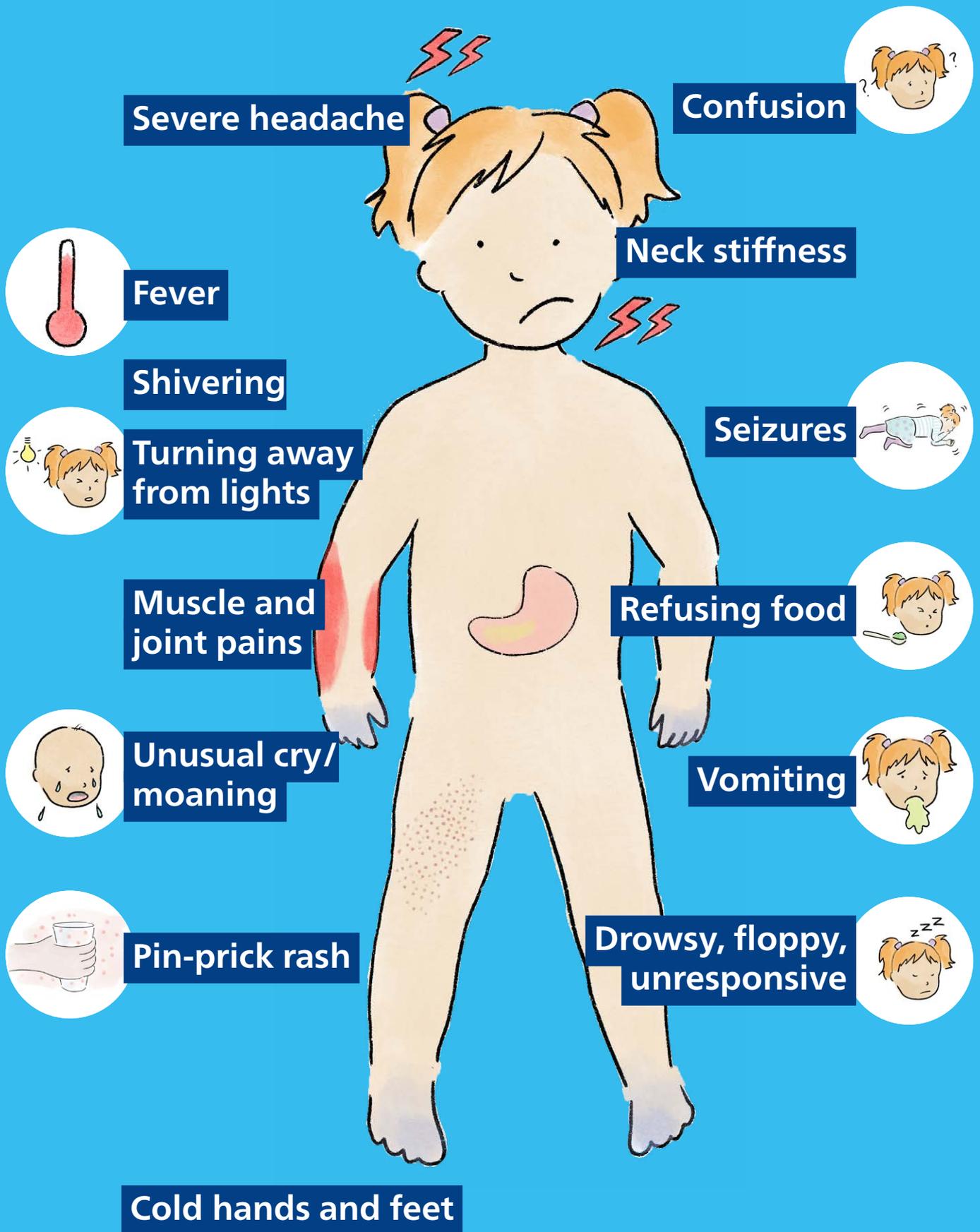
Refusing food

Pin-prick rash

Cold hands and feet

Vomiting

# Meningitis in Children



# What to keep in your medicine cabinet

Keep the following items in your medicine cabinet ready for when you need them;

- Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) Sachets (e.g. Dioralyte)
- Liquid Paracetamol (e.g. Calpol)
- Liquid Ibuprofen – please note that if your child has been diagnosed with Asthma, Ibuprofen is not recommended unless discussed with your doctor first.

Never exceed the maximum dose for paracetamol and ibuprofen in any 24-hour period. Keep a diary of when you give each dose so that you do not give your child too much.

Please check the use-by dates and keep out of reach of children. These medicines are all available over the counter from a pharmacist. The pharmacy or supermarket own brands are cheaper and work just as well, if you are unsure, ask your pharmacist.



Children can change quickly and if at any time your child displays any of the 'Red' features in the box below you should seek EMERGENCY HELP.



## RED

### If your child

- Has blue lips
- Becomes pale, mottled and feels abnormally cold to touch
- Is struggling to breathe
- Has a fit/seizure
- Becomes extremely agitated – crying inconsolably despite distraction, confused or very lethargic (difficult to wake)
- Develops a rash that does not disappear with pressure (the 'glass test')
- Is under 3 months of age with a temperature of 38°C or above (unless the fever is 48 hours following a vaccination and no other red or amber features)

**YOU NEED EMERGENCY HELP  
CALL 999**

**You need to be seen at the  
hospital Emergency Department**



## AMBER

### If your child has any one of these features

- Appears to be getting worse or if you are worried
- Restless or irritable
- Increased difficulty breathing
- Temperature of >39°C despite paracetamol and/or ibuprofen
- Continues to have a fever of 38°C or above for 5 days or more
- Reduced fluid intake by half usual amount
- Passed urine less than twice in 12 hours
- Has extreme shivering or complains or muscle pains
- Vomiting

### SEEK MEDICAL ADVICE TODAY

Please call your GP surgery, or, if it is closed call NHS 111

Your GP may want to speak to you on the phone first to give you medical advice. They will arrange to see your child if it is appropriate.



## GREEN

### If none of the features in the red or amber boxes above are present

- Has normal-coloured skin, lips and tongue
- Responds to you normally
- Is basically content and will smile
- Stays awake or awakens quickly and easily when you wake them
- Has a strong normal cry, or is not crying
- Has moist lips and tongue

See 'Important things to consider' box

### SELF-CARE

Using the advice on this leaflet you can care for your child at home.

The most important advice is to keep your child well hydrated.

If you feel you need more advice, please contact your local pharmacy, Health Visitor or GP surgery.

You can also call NHS 111 for advice.

## Important factors to consider

There are important factors to consider that may affect your child's ability to cope with infection. These are if your child:

- was a premature baby
- is less than 12 weeks old
- has a lung problem
- has a heart problem
- has a problem with their immune system
- or any other pre-existing medical condition that may affect their ability to cope with illness

We recommend that in these circumstances you seek medical advice