

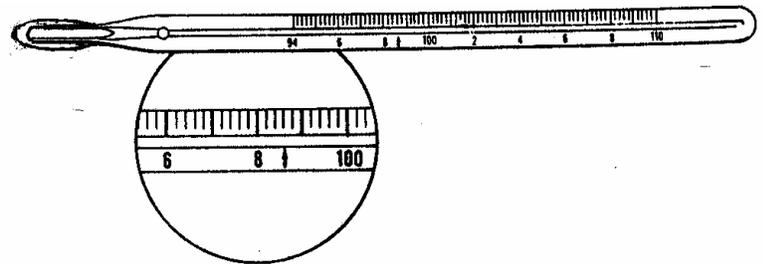
TEMPERATURE: ORAL, RECTAL, AND AXILLARY Using a Glass Thermometer

The body temperature of infants and children can change quickly. If your child becomes ill or is going to have surgery, the doctor will need to know the temperature. A child's temperature can also show if an infection is responding to medicine the child may be taking. This Helping Hand tells about the three most common ways of taking a temperature with a glass thermometer.

BEFORE TAKING A TEMPERATURE

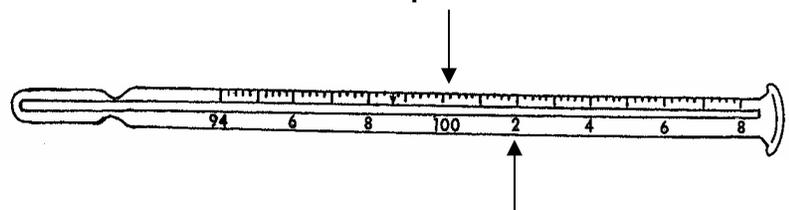
Remember: You are placing a piece of glass in your child's body. Never leave your child alone while taking his or her temperature.

1. Check the bulb of the thermometer to make sure it is not broken or cracked.
2. The thermometer is shaped like a triangle and has 3 sides. Two sides are clear glass; one side is a color you cannot see through.
3. To read a thermometer, hold it at eye level with the colored side of the thermometer away from you. You will see scale markings on the top and numbers on the bottom (Picture 1). Between the scale markings and the numbers, you will see a shiny red or silver line.
4. Read the number at the end of the line.
5. If the mercury is above 94, shake the thermometer down by grasping it firmly and snapping your wrist sharply.
6. Read the thermometer again.



Picture 1 The thermometer markings.

This is "one hundred point two".



This is "one hundred and two".

Picture 2 Reading a thermometer.

HOW TO READ A THERMOMETER

The space between the short marks is 0.2 F (two tenths of a degree Fahrenheit). The space between the large marks is 1 F (one degree Fahrenheit). Practice reading the thermometers pictured on page 2.

WAYS TO TAKE A TEMPERATURE

There are several ways to take a temperature: **Oral** (by mouth), **rectal** (by rectum or bottom), and **axillary** (under the arm). The method used usually depends on the child's age:

- For a newborn through 6 years of age, take a rectal or axillary temperature.
- For children 6 years or older who can hold the thermometer under the tongue and keep the mouth closed, take the temperature by mouth.

ORAL TEMPERATURE

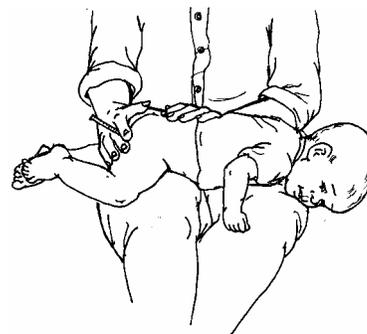
1. Use a thermometer with a long bulb (Picture 3).
2. After shaking the mercury down, place the thermometer under the child's tongue, with the bulb toward the back of the mouth. Tell your child to keep the lips firmly closed, but not to bite the thermometer.
3. Leave the thermometer in place for 3 minutes.
4. Remove the thermometer and read it.
5. **Do not** take an oral temperature if your child has just wakened, or is so ill that he cannot control drowsiness or shivering.
6. If your child has just had a very hot or cold drink, wait 10 to 20 minutes before taking the temperature.



Picture 3 The normal oral temperature is 98.6 F.

RECTAL TEMPERATURE

1. Use a thermometer with a stubby bulb (Picture 4).
2. Place a diaper or other cloth under the child (taking the temperature this way can cause the child to have a bowel movement).
3. Place the child on his stomach. Put a small amount of petroleum jelly (such as Vaseline®) on the bulb of the thermometer.
4. After shaking the mercury down, put the thermometer 1 inch into the rectum. Stay with your baby and **hold the thermometer in place** for 3 minutes.
5. Remove the thermometer and read it. (You may need to wipe it clean with a tissue before reading it.)



Picture 4 The normal rectal temperature is 99.6 F.

AXILLARY TEMPERATURE

1. Use a thermometer with a long bulb.
2. Make sure the child's underarm space is dry.
3. After shaking down the thermometer, place it under the child's arm. Fold the child's arm across his chest to keep the thermometer in place.
4. Stay with your child and hold the thermometer in place for 7 to 10 minutes.
5. Remove the thermometer and read it.



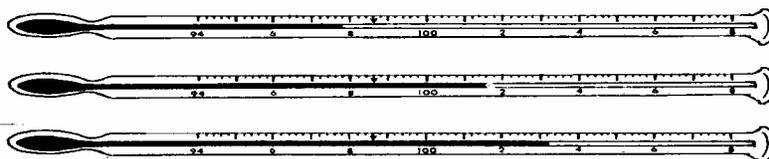
Picture 5 The normal axillary temperature is 97.6 F.

CARE OF THE THERMOMETER

- To clean a thermometer, pull it through a cool, soapy cotton ball or tissue.
- Rinse in cool water. Never use hot water to wash the thermometer. Do not put it away without washing it first. A dirty thermometer may infect your child again.
- Keep it in a safe, cool place, out of the reach of children.
- If a mercury thermometer breaks, call the Central Ohio Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222. They will tell you how to dispose of the mercury.

PRACTICE READING THE THERMOMETER

1. What is this temperature? _____
2. What is this temperature? _____
3. What is this temperature? _____



Answers

1. 97.8°F. (Ninety-seven point eight degrees).
2. 101.6°F. (One hundred and one point six degrees).
3. 103.2°F. (One hundred and three point two degrees.)