



You came to the emergency department with a fever. The doctor examined you and did any tests that were needed. No serious cause was found that needs you to stay in hospital, so you can go home. This sheet explains how to look after yourself.

What is it?

A fever is a body temperature of 38°C or higher. It is the body's normal way of fighting an infection, most often a virus such as a cold or flu. A fever itself is not usually harmful. Most fevers from viral infections settle within 3–5 days. Antibiotics only help infections caused by bacteria, so you may not need them.

Looking after yourself at home

- Drink plenty of fluids, such as water, soup or diluted juice. Fever makes you lose more fluid than usual.
- Rest, and wear light clothing. Do not wrap up in heavy blankets.
- Check your temperature with a thermometer, and write down the readings and times.
- Stay home from work and avoid close contact with others until your fever has gone, to avoid spreading infection.
- Wash your hands often, and cover your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze.
- If you have a weak immune system, for example during cancer treatment, a fever needs urgent medical advice.

Medicines

- Paracetamol can help you feel more comfortable, unless your doctor told you not to. Follow the packet or your doctor's instructions.
- Ibuprofen can also help, unless your doctor told you not to. Avoid it if you have a stomach ulcer, kidney disease, some asthma, or are pregnant.
- If you were given antibiotics, take the full course as your doctor told you, even if you feel better.

Follow-up

- See your family doctor or health centre if your fever lasts more than 3 days, or you are not improving.
- Follow any plan your doctor gave you for getting test results.

Come back to the emergency department or call an ambulance straight away if:

- A fever above 39.5°C that will not come down
- Fever with confusion, a stiff neck, or a rash that does not fade
- Difficulty breathing
- Signs of dehydration — no urine, very dry mouth, or severe weakness
- Very drowsy or hard to wake, or a seizure (fit)
- Chest pain, or feeling faint when you stand up



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This leaflet is general information to support the advice your doctor or nurse gave you today. It does not replace their advice. If you are worried, seek medical help.

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