

INFORMATION SHEET

Coronavirus (COVID-19) Health Care activities for families

Taking your relative's temperature and signs to look out for that may indicate a high temperature

We know that many children and adults with learning disabilities struggle with different forms of medical interventions. As one of the key symptoms of coronavirus is a raised temperature it is helpful to monitor people's temperature regularly during the Coronavirus pandemic.

During the pandemic it could be useful to develop a routine of taking a person's temperature even when there are no signs of illness. This may be important for two reasons, (i) to monitor the person's health in relation to any early signs of the virus and (ii) to help the person become more familiar with the procedure and therefore more likely to be accepting of the need to take their temperature as and when it may become essential for monitoring ill health.

In this document there are some practical suggestions to help when taking a person's temperature – they are suggestions that you can adapt according to the person that you are supporting. Remember some days it will be easier than others, it will take time to introduce a new activity successfully.

Types of thermometers

There are a range of thermometers to take a person's temperature – try to find one which best suits your relative's needs. Ask a Pharmacist for advice if you are unsure.



Digital Forehead & Ear Thermometer



Digital Stick Thermometer to use in mouth or under armpit

Taking your temperature

A thermometer might be really scary because it is unfamiliar and we usually only need it when someone is unwell. Families have identified ways to take their relative's temperatures when they have been reluctant to do so. Try different ways to help your relative feel less worried about having their temperature taken. This may include:

- Use your relative's preferred method of communication to let them know what you will be doing, for example: Signing, Photos or Symbols or actual objects. Use whatever works best for your relative.
- Taking your relative's temperature regularly as part of their daily routine (i.e. taking their temperature in the same way, at the same time each day)
- Choosing a time to introduce taking temperature when they will be calm and relaxed
- Breaking the task down into small steps, or "chaining" can help, click [here](#) to learn more on our Teaching New Skills information sheet
- Pairing the activity with something your relative likes (see example below)
- Taking your own temperature and then your relative's
- Using visual symbols that your relative is familiar with to show the sequence of taking your temperature.
- Add temperature taking to a visual timetable or 'now and next' chart, if you use them

Adults: if your temperature is above 100.4°F (37.8°C), you have a fever.

Children: a child is said to have a fever if their temperature is above 99.5°F (37.5°C).

**Please note, taking your relative's temperature under their armpit gives you a reading which is approximately half a degree lower, than if temperature is taken by mouth. This is another reason to keep an eye out for other signs of raised temperature, such as:

- Sweat
- Warm forehead
- Headache
- Shiver (chills)
- Aching muscles
- Rash
- Feeling weak
- Loss of appetite

It is Important to note that children may also have a low-grade fever after some immunisations or when they are teething. Adults may have a raised temperature because of an underlying infection not associated with Coronavirus. It is important to rule these out or consider them before assuming it is coronavirus.

If your relative has a high temperature, with a new persistent/continuous dry cough, **which are symptoms of coronavirus** use the [111 coronavirus service](#).



To help her daughter be more comfortable with having her temperature taken, Debbie paired the thermometer with a chocolate as a reward. Here's Debbie's account of what she did:

We used a "temperature chocolate" My daughter likes watching short clips on TV, and she likes chocolate, so we joined them up like so:

- **Parent:** "Shall we do temperature chocolate?"
- **Daughter:** "Not that one, no temperature chocolate"
- **Parent:** "Would you like Tv?"
- **Daughter:** "Yes"
- **Parent:** "Tv then temperature chocolate?"
- **Daughter:** "Yes"
- We watch a couple of you tube videos, I then pause just before a favourite.
- **Parent:** "Temperature chocolate then more you tube"
- She runs to kitchen accepts having her temperature taken twice, has a chocolate and back to TV.



Another commonly used method to take a temperature is to use distraction. This could be taken whilst:

Use anything that you think will distract you relative, ideally something they really enjoy, to allow you to take their temperature. Find some ideas below:

- Watching a preferred TV programme together
- Looking at an iPad or tablet
- Holding a favourite toy or object
- Looking at a book together

If you don't succeed in taking their temperature straight away, don't panic, you can try again later. Sometimes it is just not possible and won't be tolerated by your relative.

There are also other signs to look out for that may indicate a high temperature, these could include:

Facial expression: grimacing or frowning. Eyes look drowsy and glassy or more sunken than usual?

Colour of skin: Does your relative look flushed, pink or red, sweaty or paler than usual? Are they shivering?

Increase in challenging behaviours: Is your relative displaying more or different behaviours that are challenging?

Emotional responses: Have they become quiet and withdrawn? Are they crying or showing signs of distress? Are they irritable and less able to tolerate things they normally can?

Changes to eating or drinking pattern: Have they lost their appetite or are refusing favourite foods or drinks? Are they requesting more drinks than usual?

Changes to sleeping pattern: Sleeping more or less than usual?

Changes to engagement in preferred activities: Are they refusing favourite activities?

Physiological changes: Increase in heart rate or pulse or breathing more quickly?

You know your relative best, and this is the kind of information you naturally know. There are little signs that are unique to your relative and could indicate that they have a temperature or are unwell.

If your relative lives with you and is showing these symptoms of a high temperature, you should seek medical advice via your GP or 111.

If your relative does not live with you, you should ensure this information is easily available in your relative's records and support plans

The CBF Family Support Team offer information and emotional support to family carers who have a relative with a severe learning disability, who may display behaviour described as challenging. By severe learning disabilities, we mean very limited or no verbal communication, as well as a great difficulty in learning new skills or completing everyday tasks. We are not medically trained but will identify the most appropriate information and contacts for you. If your relative does not have a severe learning disability, we will signpost you to more appropriate organisations.

Family Support Direct Line: 0300 666 0126 **Email:** support@thecbf.org.uk

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