

Important information

“Acetaminophen” is the generic name of the medication that is commercially available under the following brand names: Acet™, Ataso™, Tempra™, Tylenol™ and other private brands. Acetaminophen has analgesic (pain-relieving) and antipyretic (fever-reducing) properties, but no anti-inflammatory properties. Although it is an over-the-counter medication, its use in educational childcare must comply with strict criteria.

Under *Educational Childcare Regulation* (chapter S-4.1.1, r. 2) acetaminophen may be administered to a child receiving childcare without the authorization of a health care professional authorized by law to prescribe the medication, provided it is administered in accordance with this Protocol and that a parent has given written consent. A parent must report any known allergy to acetaminophen. In case of an allergy to acetaminophen, educational childcare providers cannot administer it to the child. To be authorized to administer acetaminophen to a child, educational childcare providers must first specify the child's weight (in kilograms) in the authorization form provided for in this Protocol and confirm it with the parents (by obtaining their initials) at least every three months.

The parents are under no obligation to provide consent for the application of this Protocol. However, should a parent not sign the authorization form provided for in this protocol, no acetaminophen may be administered to the child unless the parent and a health care professional authorized by law to prescribe the medication provide written authorization.

Basic rules

Within the framework of this Protocol, acetaminophen may only be administered to reduce fever. **It may not be administered:**

- to children under 3 months of age (the presence of fever at this age warrants a medical consultation);
- to relieve pain (the presence of pain warrants a medical consultation);
- for more than 48 consecutive hours (2 days); or
- to children who have received medication containing acetaminophen in the preceding 4 hours.

In those 4 cases, the Protocol does not apply, and written authorizations from a physician and the parent are required to administer the acetaminophen.

Acetaminophen must never be administered before the child's temperature has been taken with a thermometer.

Educational childcare providers may have their own acetaminophen container, in which case the brand name, the dosage form (e.g. liquid suspension) and the concentration (milligrams/millilitres, i.e. 80 mg/ml, 80 mg/5 ml, or 160 mg/5 ml) must be indicated on the authorization form.

When purchasing acetaminophen at the pharmacy, educational childcare providers must ensure that they buy a product that contains acetaminophen only. Products that combine acetaminophen and other drugs together (decongestants, cough suppressants, or expectorants) are strictly prohibited. When buying acetaminophen, do not hesitate to ask your pharmacist for advice on which format has the optimal concentration. Private brands of acetaminophen sold in pharmacies are as effective as original brands.

To prevent the risk of error, educational childcare providers must keep only one concentration of liquid acetaminophen (80 mg/ml, 80 mg/5 ml, or 160 mg/5 ml). If all the children receiving childcare are aged under 18 months, the use of an 80 mg/ml concentration is recommended. If all children receiving childcare are older than 18 months, the use of an 80 mg/5 ml or 160 mg/5 ml concentration is recommended. If the children receiving childcare come from various age groups, educational childcare providers must choose and keep only one of the three available concentrations (80 mg/ml, 80 mg/5 ml, or 160 mg/5 ml).

Always favour the use of liquid acetaminophen. Tablets must be avoided since they do not allow accurate dosage, especially for children under 5 years old.

Educational childcare providers must ensure they only keep acetaminophen containers with a valid expiration date. Containers with expired acetaminophen must be returned to the pharmacy for disposal. If said containers have been provided by a parent, they must be returned to them instead.

Acetaminophen containers must be kept in a storage space out of the reach of children and away from food, toxic products, and cleaning products. The educational childcare provider must keep that space locked.

What you need to know

WHAT IS FEVER?

A fever occurs when the body temperature is higher than normal. However, a “normal temperature” in children may vary depending on the child, the time of day, the outdoor temperature and the child’s level of activity. The consumption of hot or cold foods can affect oral temperature readings.

The value varies depending on the method used to take the temperature.

HOW DO YOU TAKE A CHILD’S TEMPERATURE?

Taking a child’s temperature is the only way to tell if they have a fever. Check the child’s temperature whenever their general condition changes (frantic crying, loss of energy or appetite, irritability, etc.) or physical signs or symptoms (flushed cheeks, excessively warm skin, sweating) could indicate a fever.

- The rectal method is the most reliable method to take a person’s temperature.
- The axillary method (under the armpit) may be used to take the first measure but is not as accurate as the rectal method. If the reading displays a temperature of 37.5 °C or higher, take the child’s temperature again with the rectal method to confirm that they have a fever.
- The oral method is recommended for children over 5 years old who comply.
- The tympanic (through the ear) method is not recommended, as it is less accurate.
- Always use a digital thermometer. Do not use glass and mercury thermometers; they pose a risk of contamination and toxicity if they break.
- Do not use fever strips (strips you stick on the brow or cheeks) because they do not give accurate readings.

VALUES THAT INDICATE THE PRESENCE OF A FEVER PER METHOD FOR CHILDREN AGED 3 MONTHS AND OLDER

Children under 3 months old have a fever if their rectal temperature is higher than 38.0 °C. Always favour the rectal method when taking the temperature of children under 3 months old. See the “[Basic rules](#)” section.

Age	Recommended method	Values in degrees Celsius (°C) and degrees Fahrenheit (°F)
3 months to 5 years old	Rectal	38.5 °C or higher, or 101.3 °F or higher
	Axillary (under the armpit)	37.5 °C or higher, or 99.5 °F or higher
+5 years old	Oral	38 °C or higher, or 100.4 °F or higher
	Axillary (under the armpit)	37.5 °C or higher, or 99.5 °F or higher

WHAT ARE THE STEPS TO TAKE A CHILD’S TEMPERATURE?

1. Wash your hands before and after taking the child’s temperature (see the “Hygiène des mains” section in Chapter 4 of the “Prévention et contrôle des infections en service de garde et écoles du Québec” guide).
2. Spread lubricant jelly or a bit of water on the tip of the thermometer before taking the child’s rectal temperature. It is important to use lubricant jelly in single-dose packs. The use of large containers or multiple-use tubes is prohibited to avoid contamination.
3. Always use a disposable sheath that adequately covers the thermometer. For each method (rectal, oral, or axillary), you may use a designated thermometer and its case to take the temperature of several children, as long as the recommended cleaning and sanitizing procedures are strictly followed between each use, regardless of the use of a protective sheath.
4. If the child has consumed food or liquids, wait 20 minutes before taking their temperature.
5. Never use the same thermometer to take rectal and oral temperatures.
6. Thoroughly disinfect the thermometer between each use, in accordance with the manufacturer’s recommendations.
7. Always comply with the time requirements for the thermometer being used since the time required may vary with the thermometer.

What you need to do if a child has a fever

For children under 3 months old with a rectal temperature higher than 38.0 °C:

- notify the parent immediately and ask the parent to come and pick up the child;
- administer acetaminophen only with the authorization of a health care professional authorized by law to prescribe the medication and with the written authorization from a parent for that child;
- dress the child lightly and comfortably;
- have the child drink at more frequent intervals;
- keep an eye on the child and take the child's temperature again after 60 minutes, or sooner if the child's condition seems to be worsening;
- if the parent cannot come to pick up the child, call the persons designated as emergency contacts, and if they cannot be reached, take the child to a hospital emergency department.

For children aged 3 months old and older (see the values' table):

- inform the parent of the child's condition;
- dress the child lightly and comfortably;
- have the child drink at more frequent intervals;
- administer acetaminophen following the dosage prescribed in the table provided for in this Protocol and in accordance with the "**Basic rules**" section;
- keep an eye on the child and take the child's temperature again after 60 minutes, or sooner if the child's condition seems to be worsening;
- if acetaminophen has been administered, take the child's temperature again one hour after administration. If the fever persists or if the child's general condition makes it difficult for them to participate in their group's activities, take the child away from the educational childcare service and ask the parent to come and pick them up. If the parent cannot be reached, call the persons designated as emergency contacts and if they cannot be reached either, take the child to a hospital emergency department.

DETERMINATION OF ACETAMINOPHEN DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION

Steps to administer acetaminophen

- Check the child's weight indicated in this Protocol. To ensure the treatment is effective, use the weight to determine the exact dosage—not the age. If in doubt, validate the child's weight with a parent;
- Always use simple words, appropriate to the child's age, to explain to the child the relationship between their condition, the medication being taken and the expected results;
- Wash your hands with soap and water or hydroalcoholic solution before handling the medication;
- Always check:
 - the product name on the container, to make sure it is acetaminophen;
 - the acetaminophen concentration (80 mg/ml, 80 mg/5 ml, or 160 mg/5 ml) indicated on the container before you determine the dose to be administered;
 - the product's expiry date.
- Determine the dosage by referring to the table provided for in this Protocol;
- Never exceed the dosage indicated in the table provided for in this Protocol;
- Always ensure accuracy when measuring the liquid acetaminophen dose to be administered, using a graduated oral syringe (in millilitres), or a graduated dropper (in millilitres). Never use a kitchen spoon. The use of a graduated oral syringe (in millilitres) is particularly recommended since it allows a more accurate measure of the dosage;
- If you are using liquid acetaminophen (suspension), shake the container before drawing the dose;
- Once you have measured the dose using the graduated oral syringe or the graduated dropper, pour the acetaminophen in a graduated spoon (in millilitres) and administer the medication to the child. Never insert the dropper or syringe directly into the child's mouth, unless it is a disposable dropper or syringe. Always clean and sanitize the used spoon or cup after using it if you wish to reuse it;
- Wash your hands with soap and water or hydroalcoholic solution after administering the medication.

What you need to do if a child has a fever (continued)

ACETAMINOPHEN DOSES TO BE ADMINISTERED ACCORDING TO THE CHILD'S WEIGHT

- Indicated dosage is based on a maximal dose of 15 mg/kg/dose.
- The dosage unit may be repeated every 4 to 6 hours.
- Do not exceed 5 doses in a 24-hour period.

Child's weight	Volume of medication to be administered per concentration of acetaminophen-based product		
	80 mg/ml	80 mg/5 ml	160 mg/5 ml
4.3–5.3	0.8 ml	4 ml	2.0 ml
5.4–6.3	1.0 ml	5 ml	2.5 ml
6.4–7.4	1.2 ml	6 ml	3.0 ml
7.5–8.5	1.4 ml	7 ml	3.5 ml
8.6–9.5	1.6 ml	8 ml	4.0 ml
9.6–10.6	1.8 ml	9 ml	4.5 ml
10.7–11.7	2.0 ml	10 ml	5.0 ml
11.8–12.7	2.2 ml	11 ml	5.5 ml
12.8–13.8	2.4 ml	12 ml	6.0 ml
13.9–14.9	2.6 ml	13 ml	6.5 ml
15.0–15.9	2.8 ml	14 ml	7.0 ml
16.0–17.0	3.0 ml	15 ml	7.5 ml
17.1–18.1	3.2 ml	16 ml	8.0 ml
18.2–19.1	3.4 ml	17 ml	8.5 ml
19.2–20.2	3.6 ml	18 ml	9.0 ml
20.3–21.3	3.8 ml	19 ml	9.5 ml
21.4–22.3	4.0 ml	20 ml	10.0 ml
22.4–23.4	4.2 ml	21 ml	10.5 ml
23.5–24.5	4.4 ml	22 ml	11.0 ml
24.6–25.5	4.6 ml	23 ml	11.5 ml
25.6–26.6	4.8 ml	24 ml	12.0 ml
26.7–27.7	5.0 ml	25 ml	12.5 ml
27.8–28.7	5.2 ml	26 ml	13.0 ml
28.8–29.8	5.4 ml	27 ml	13.5 ml
29.9–30.9	5.6 ml	28 ml	14.0 ml
31.0–31.9	5.8 ml	29 ml	14.5 ml
32.0–33.0	6.0 ml	30 ml	15.0 ml
33.1–34.1	6.2 ml	31 ml	15.5 ml
34.2–35.1	6.4 ml	32 ml	16.0 ml

ERROR IN THE DOSE ADMINISTERED

If you notice the dose of acetaminophen was too high after you have administered it to a child, it is essential that you react quickly. Contact the Quebec Poison Control Centre (1-800-463-5060) immediately and follow their instructions. The child's parent must be notified.

Warning

IBUPROFEN (ADVIL™, MOTRIN™, AND OTHER BRANDS)

A clear distinction must be made between acetaminophen and ibuprofen. Ibuprofen must never be given to children under 6 months old.

Although both medications have antipyretic (fever-reducing) properties, they must not be confused because they belong to different classes of medications and work differently. Ibuprofen must not, under any circumstances, be substituted for acetaminophen in the application of this Protocol. It is thus important to be careful not to ever confuse ibuprofen and acetaminophen.

Note that this Protocol may be applied as indicated even if a child has received ibuprofen at home before arriving at the educational childcare service, regardless of the time elapsed. There are no contraindications to giving acetaminophen to a child who received ibuprofen earlier since the two medications do not work in the same way.

OTHER MEDICATIONS

The increasing number of medications containing acetaminophen combined with another pharmaceutical product that are made available on the market calls for greater care in applying this Protocol. A number of cough syrups, for example, contain acetaminophen.

It is thus important to have a good communication between the parents and the person authorized to administer the acetaminophen. The person authorized to administer the medication needs to know which medication was administered to the child in the 4 hours preceding the child's arrival at the educational childcare service, and to ask the parent if those medications contained acetaminophen. Concurrently, the parents must be informed of the acetaminophen doses and the hours they were administered at the educational childcare service. Remember that you must always wait at least 4 hours before administering another dose of acetaminophen to a child.

Authorization form for administering acetaminophen to reduce fever in children who receive educational childcare

Important

The parents are under no obligation to provide consent for the application of this Protocol. However, should a parent not sign the authorization form, no acetaminophen may be administered to the child unless the parent and a health care professional authorized by law to prescribe the medication provide written authorization. A limit may be added to the period of validity of the authorization by indicating the duration of application in the section provided for this purpose.

This revised version of the Protocol for the administration of acetaminophen to children who receive educational childcare services was developed with the participation of representatives from the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux. The information it contains reflects the state of knowledge on the subject in 2024.

Authorization

Name of the educational childcare centre, day care centre, recognized home educational childcare provider, as well as their assistant, as the case may be, or the person designated pursuant to section 81 of the *Educational Childcare Regulation* if applicable:

- A. I hereby authorize** the aforementioned educational childcare provider to provide for and administer to my child acetaminophen sold under the following brand name: _____.
- OR**
- B. I will supply my own** acetaminophen sold under the brand name _____ and I authorize the aforementioned educational childcare provider to administer it to my child.

Duration of authorization: _____

Child identification

Child's full name: _____

Child's weight in kg	Date (year-month-day)	Parent's initials

Child's weight in kg	Date (year-month-day)	Parent's initials

Signature

Parent's signature: _____

Date signed (year-month-day): _____