

# It's Cool to Be Cool!

In the past, measuring our daily temperatures was not a routine that we would normally perform. With the outbreak of SARS, it has become an important part of our lifestyle as a sudden onset of fever higher than 38°C is regarded as the first symptom of the virus.

Simple as it is, many people still do not know when and how to take temperatures correctly. Here is a guide to taking temperatures, accurately and correctly.

## When to take your temperature:

Wait for 30 minutes before temperature taking if you have just exercised, been outdoors, eaten, drunk or showered.

## How to take your temperature:

Measuring your temperature is not as simple as sticking the thermometer into your mouth or ear. There are different ways of temperature taking for the different types of thermometers available.

### Glass thermometer

1. Wash the thermometer bulb with soap and water before use.
2. Shake the thermometer a few times to bring the level of the mercury below 35°C.
3. Temperatures can be taken from the armpit or mouth.
  - Armpit reading:
    - Place the thermometer bulb under your armpit.
    - Fold your arm across the chest to hold the thermometer in place.
    - Remove the thermometer and read the temperature after 5 minutes.
  - Oral reading:
    - Place the thermometer bulb under your tongue.
    - Close your mouth and do not talk or bite the thermometer.
    - Remove the thermometer and read the temperature after 3 minutes.
4. Wash the bulb of the thermometer with soap and water after use.



### Digital thermometer

1. Wash the area of the thermometer bulb with soap and water before use.
2. Switch on the thermometer and wait until it is ready to register a reading.
3. Temperatures can be taken from the armpit or mouth.
  - Armpit reading:
    - Place the thermometer bulb under your armpit.
    - Fold your arm across your chest to hold the thermometer in place.
    - The thermometer will beep to signal that the temperature display is ready for reading.
    - Remove the thermometer and read the temperature.
  - Oral reading:
    - Place the thermometer bulb under your tongue.
    - Close your mouth and do not talk or bite the thermometer.
    - The thermometer will beep to signal that the temperature display is ready for reading.
    - Remove the thermometer and read the temperature.
4. Wash the area of the thermometer bulb with soap and water after use.



### Ear (tympanic) thermometer

1. Place a new disposable cap over the probe.
2. Switch on the thermometer.
3. Pull the ear backwards and upwards to straighten the ear canal when the thermometer is ready to register a reading.
4. Insert the thermometer's probe into the ear canal.
5. Press the activation button and hold until a reading appears (some models may beep when it is ready for a reading).
6. Remove the thermometer and read the temperature.
7. Discard cap after use (use a new cap for every temperature taking).





### Remember:

- It is important to read the manufacturer's instructions on the proper use of the thermometer.
- When washing glass or digital thermometers, wash only the area in contact with the mouth/skin as the thermometer may not be waterproof.
- Do not talk when taking an oral temperature or move about when taking an armpit temperature.

### Do you know...

- Temperatures taken at different parts of the body present different readings – those taken from the armpit are lower than readings from the mouth and ear.  
For adults: if the armpit temperature is over 37.0°C, the oral temperature is over 37.3°C, or the ear temperature is over 37.7°C, you have a fever.  
Children (below 12 years) have a fever if the armpit

temperature is over 37.3°C, the oral temperature is over 37.6°C or the ear temperature is over 37.9°C.

- The normal temperature for healthy adults and children ranges from 36.2°C to 37.2°C and the average normal temperature is taken as 37.0°C.
- Children tend to have higher body temperatures due to higher metabolic rates.
- Women who are ovulating may have temperatures that are 0.5°C higher due to hormonal changes in their bodies.
- Adults over 65 years of age may have temperatures that are 0.3°C lower because of lower metabolic rates.
- The times of the month and day also affect your temperature. The body is at its lowest temperature at 3am when it is at rest, and at its highest at 6pm after a busy day. To ensure accurate readings, it is advisable to take your temperature at the same time everyday.

This article was adapted from the Health Promotion Board website: <http://www.hpb.gov.sg>

## It's in Your Hands

Good hygiene starts with your hands. To prevent the spread of infections and to protect your personal and family's health, good hand hygiene is one of the most important measures that you can take. It's really in your hands!

### Why must I wash hands?

Bacteria and viruses are not visible to the naked eye. Your hands may appear clean but there could be germs on them which are easily passed on to those you are in contact with. Germs can also survive up to 24 hours in dirty hands.

### When must you wash your hands?

- Before: preparing or handling food; eating; giving or applying medication.
- After: eating; sneezing or coughing onto palms; coming in contact with wound or body fluids (eg. nasal discharge, vesicle fluid from a blister and vomitus); handling pets, pet cages and contaminated objects; cleaning your rooms, bathroom or toys; using the washroom; and when hands are visibly dirty.

### How should you wash your hands?

- Wet hands and apply soap on hands.
- Lather thoroughly all surfaces of hands:
  - between the fingers
  - up to the wrists
  - front and back of hands
  - tips of fingers and thumbs
- Rub hands together for 15 seconds.
- Rinse hands under running water.
- Dry hands with disposable paper towels or single-use towels. Dispose used towels properly in bins lined with trash bags.



This article was adapted from the Ministry of Community Development & Sports website: <http://www.mcds.gov.sg>