

Improve Accuracy of Noncontact Infrared Thermometers

Patients will ask you about forehead infrared thermometers...due to increased screening for fever during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Explain that these "no-touch" thermometers are convenient, reliable, and accurate...WHEN used properly.

Consider some rules of thumb to optimize accuracy of noncontact thermometers when they're used at your pharmacy or by patients.

Store the thermometer out of temperature extremes and, if possible, where it will be used...temp changes can impact readings.

Limit other factors that can affect accuracy.

For example, check temperatures in a draft-free area and out of direct sunlight. And ask patients to move hair or clothing away from their forehead...and wipe away any sweat or dirt.

In general, aim the thermometer about 2 inches straight out from the middle of the forehead.

Consider 38°C or higher a fever in most cases...and be ready to advise on next steps.

For example, ask about other symptoms...and discuss COVID-19 viral testing and self-care strategies.

Keep in mind, temp screenings aren't foolproof. Patients with COVID-19 may be afebrile...or taking an antipyretic (NSAIDs, etc).

If you're not sure a reading is accurate, recheck it once or twice. But wait several minutes after a patient comes in from the heat or cold...or has been physically active.

Ensure the thermometer is being used on the correct site (forehead, wrist, etc) and setting (body, object, etc) per labelling.

Expect that most infrared thermometers won't need calibration.

Avoid touching the sensor. Most need minimal cleaning with alcohol, but some should only be wiped with a soft cloth.

Dispel the myth that these thermometers emit radiation. Explain that they measure infrared energy coming off the body.

See our *Thermometer Comparison* chart to review the different types (oral, rectal, etc), considerations for use, and costs.

Key References:

- www.fda.gov/medical-devices/general-hospital-devices-and-supplies/non-contact-infrared-thermometers (10-22-20)
- www.fda.gov/medical-devices/coronavirus-covid-19-and-medical-devices/non-contact-temperature-assessment-devices-during-covid-19-pandemic (10-22-20)
- www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/symptoms.html (10-22-20)
- www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/fever/Pages/How-to-Take-a-Childs-Temperature.aspx (10-22-20)

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