



Question

Are infrared thermometers safe?

Elizabeth Murray, DO, FAAP

Answer

You may have seen the social media posts warning about possible dangers of non-contact infrared thermometers. These devices, which are held up to a person's forehead to take their temperature, are being widely used in schools and child care centers. The good news is that the claims about their danger are **false**.



What exactly is a non-contact infrared thermometer?

Like other types of thermometers, these devices measure the temperature of a surface. They do this by gathering the heat coming from the person (in this case, usually the person's forehead). It is the infrared light coming from the person that is being gathered by the thermometer, not infrared light being projected to the person.

What are the benefits of non-contact infrared thermometers?

Reducing shared touch points is very important in slowing the spread of COVID-19 ([/English/health-issues/conditions/COVID-19/Pages/default.aspx](#)) as well and other germs, which is why touch-free devices like these are useful. They give us the information we need while lowering the risk of coming in contact with the virus. These devices are also very quick, which allows for rapid screening of a large number of people in a relatively short period of time.

Are there any downsides to non-contact infrared thermometers?

No device is perfect. And while you don't need to worry about their safety, there are some concerns about how accurate these thermometers really are. Readings can be affected by clothing, drafts, direct sunlight and cold air. Since the temperature is being measured from the child's forehead, for example, items such as winter ([/English/safety-prevention/at-play/Pages/Winter-Safety.aspx](#)) hats or head bands can temporarily skew the results. However, this is easily corrected by reminding students to remove their hats as they enter the school or approach the building. A child's temperature can also be retaken once they're inside and warmed up.

Remember

Making sure that anyone using a non-contact infrared thermometer knows the how to use it correctly will also help with accurate readings. Talk with your pediatrician if you have any questions about taking your child's temperature ([/English/health-issues/conditions/fever/Pages/How-to-Take-a-Childs-Temperature.aspx](#)) and whether they might be sick.

More Information

- [How to Take Your Child's Temperature \(/English/health-issues/conditions/fever/Pages/How-to-Take-a-Childs-Temperature.aspx\)](#) Back to Top
- [Non-Contact Infrared Thermometers \(https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/general-hospital-devices-and-supplies/non-contact-infrared-thermometers\)](https://www.fda.gov/medical-devices/general-hospital-devices-and-supplies/non-contact-infrared-thermometers) (FDA)

Elizabeth Murray, DO, FAAP

Elizabeth Murray, DO, MBA, FAAP, is board-certified in pediatrics and pediatric emergency medicine. She is an Assistant Professor in both the Departments of Pediatrics and Emergency Medicine at the University of Rochester. Prior to entering medical school, Dr. Murray completed an MBA at the University of Rochester's Simon School of Business Administration. She was named an official spokesperson of the American Academy of Pediatrics in 2014 and can be seen regularly on Good Day Rochester, ABC Affiliate Rochester, NY.

Last Updated 10/15/2020

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