



FEVER



Definition:

Rectal temp over 100.4 F (38 C) – this is the most accurate temperature.

Oral, axillary or ear over 99.5 (37.5) these can vary from accurate to 1 degree difference.

Causes of Fever:

Your temperature can vary throughout the day. It may become higher with exercise, excessive clothing, hot weather, warm drinks etc.. It also tends to be higher in the evening hours. If your child's temperature is elevated and think it could be due to environmental effect, change the environment as appropriate and recheck in 30 minutes.

Fever can be caused by many different things. It is the body's response to illness or inflammation or can be created by those environmental factors listed above. Fever is a result of something rather than the cause. Fevers between 100.4 and 104 F are normal ranges for fevers associated with viral and bacterial illness and are not considered harmful. Many viruses responsible for the common cold cause fever as well as ear infections and the flu. The issue, rather, is what is causing the fever and can it be treated. Often parents feel that the fever may be from teething. Teething does not cause temperatures above 100 F and therefore; babies with fever should be evaluated.

Time Course:

Fevers typically last 1-3 days. Fevers for longer than 3 days or association with an ill appearing child should be evaluated by your doctor. How sick the child acts is more important than the height of fever. Of course you should contact your doctor at anytime you are concerned and for all babies less than 3 months of age, regardless of other symptoms, or temperature greater than 104 F.

Are Fevers Harmful?

A very small percentage of children with fevers with develop febrile (fever) seizures. This is most common between 6 months and 6 years. These are generally harmless and should cause excessive worry. There have not been any studies that show that fevers <107 cause any permanent brain damage. However, the organism causing the fever may be harmful.

Treatment: You can use (NSAIDs) non steroidal anti-Inflammatory medication (advil, ibuprofen, motrin, aleve) or acetaminophen (Tylenol). Infants under 6 months of age should NOT receive NSAIDs. DO NOT give your child aspirin as it can be linked to Reye Syndrome, a brain and spinal cord inflammatory disease, if given in the presence of certain other illnesses. If your child is under 3 months of age, please consult the doctor before giving any medication. Most children are comfortable until the temperature reaches 102 F and since a fever is the body's natural response to fighting infection or inflammation, you should let it do its job and use medications only to make your child more comfortable. Remember that these medications are to make you child more comfortable by reducing the temperature, not curing an illness. Since these medications are meant to bring the temperature down about 2 degrees, their fever may not "break" and become "normal," but is likely to reduce it into a more comfortable zone. Also, some virus and bacteria are more likely to cause higher fevers and may therefore seem more difficult to "break." Because it lasts 4-6 hours on average, you can expect that the fever will return until



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the infection decreases and the bodies need for fever is reduced. When your child is hot from the fever, be sure not to over bundle him as this can make his temperature even higher. Also, when they get “the chills” this usually indicates that the temperature is dropping. You may cover them with a light blanket, but do not over bundle.

Many people think they should alternate Tylenol and Motrin product to keep the fever down. These medications work in a similar fashion and giving more frequent dosing with multiple medications can lead to a greater likelihood of error in dosing. Also, remember fever is a product of an illness and is letting you know that something else is wrong and does not need to be controlled so vigorously. If you find that Tylenol is not helping with the fever, you can try an ibuprofen product. Even in the case of febrile seizures, studies do not show added benefit of combining these two types of medication. Many parents are concerned over fever and use cool baths to bring the fever down. You should use one of the children’s products listed above first. If you are unable to get the temperature into a comfortable range and your child is acting ok, you may put him in a few inches of luke warm water and “sponge” him/her down. This should mostly be avoided as it causes shivering in an attempt to bring the bodies temperature back up. You do not have to repeatedly check your child’s temperature. You can do it when they feel warm again or show symptoms of fever.

Remember, fever is a good thing and is helping the body fight off illness so it is ok to let it do its job. Try not to focus on the fever as much as the cause and how your child is acting. If you have any questions or concerns, you should contact your doctor for further instructions. If you are unsure about dosing, please contact your doctor or pharmacist.