

## FEVER

Fever is the most common reason that parents call pediatricians.

Many parents worry that a fever can cause lasting damage to their child and that a high fever must be aggressively controlled in order for their child to become well. If you have any of these beliefs, you're more worried about fever than you need to be.

- 1. Definition:** A temperature should not be considered a fever until it reaches 100.4° rectally. Too often normal temperature variations during the day are misinterpreted as abnormal. Temperature elevations can also be caused by excessive clothing or exercise within the previous half hour. We all have some temperature variation throughout the day. 98.6 is an average number. 99 is not a fever. Fever in children is usually caused by viral illness. Fever is the body's normal response to infection. By itself, fever is not dangerous and will not go high enough to cause harm (even when over 104°F), unless the child's environmental temperature isn't controlled (i.e. being in a hot car with windows up.) In fact, fever is useful in fighting infections. Fevers usually last two or three days. There are several things you can do to keep your child comfortable.
- 2. Medicines:** Use Tylenol, Ibuprofen, or any non-aspirin acetaminophen product for any of the following: the temperature is more than 102°F and the child is uncomfortable, or any fever that exists at bedtime. The proper dose is based on the child's weight. There are some fevers that do not respond at all to fever medication. However that is not cause to panic. Remember, the fever will not cause harm.

Ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) is also available for fever and/or pain, but consider it only after trying acetaminophen. Ibuprofen may work better for high fevers (>T 103°) or for teething and ear pain. It is given every 6 hours. Refer to the chart below.

### Doses for Acetaminophen (every 4 hours) or Ibuprofen (every 6 hours)

Age	Weight	Drops	Elixir	Chewable	Jr. Strength
0-3 mo.	6-11 lbs.	½ dropper	----	----	----
4-11 mo.	12-17 lbs.	1 dropper	----	----	----
12-23 mo.	18-23 lbs.	1 ½ dropper	¾ tsp.	1 ½ tabs.	----
2-3 yrs.	24-35 lbs.	2 dropper	1 tsp.	2 tabs.	----
4-5 yrs.	36-47 lbs.	----	1 ½ tsp.	3 tabs.	----
6-8 yrs.	48-59 lbs.	----	2 tsp.	4 tabs.	----
9-10 yrs.	60-71 lbs.	----	2 ½ tsp.	5 tabs.	2 ½ cap.
11 yrs.	72-95 lbs.	----	3 tsp.	6 tabs.	3 cap.
12-14 yrs.	96 lbs. & over	----	----	----	4 cap.

### **Fever continued...**

3. Dress your child lightly to allow the warmth from his/her body to escape. **Do not bundle.**
4. If your child would enjoy it, you may sponge bathe him/her in lukewarm water. This will only lower the temperature temporarily, so be sure to administer acetaminophen first. If your child is shivering then the water is too cold. Shivering increases body temperature. **Never** sponge with alcohol.
5. **Mistakes:** Parents rely too much on the degree of fever or to the response to medications to gauge the degree of illness in their child. If your child with a high fever looks and acts fine, then don't worry about the fever. However, if there is only a low-grade fever, yet the child acts and looks very sick, he/she is really more ill than the fever indicates. Trust your instincts! Do not focus on the number!
6. **Call our office during regular hours if:**
  - a. Your child is three to six months old.
  - b. The fever has been present over 72 hours.
  - c. The fever goes away for over 24 hours then returns.
  - d. If no reason is apparent to explain the fever and it has lasted for over 24 hours in children six to 24 months.
  - e. There is burning or pain with urination or an earache.
7. **Call our office urgently if:**
  - a. The child is less than three months.
  - b. The child seems very sick to you or is not responding to you appropriately.
  - c. The fever is 104°F or more, orally or rectally.
  - d. The neck is stiff.
  - e. He/she is confused or delirious.
  - f. He/she is having difficulty with his/her breathing.
  - g. He/she has any purple spots on his/her skin.
  - h. Call 911 if you think your child is critically sick and needs immediate attention.