

Fever



DESCRIPTION:

A fever means the body temperature is above normal. Your child has a fever if his or her temperature is over 100.4F. The body's average temperature when it is measured orally is 98.6F, but it normally fluctuates during the day. Mild elevations up to 100.4F can be caused by exercise, excessive clothing, a hot bath, or hot weather. Warm food or drink can raise the oral temperature.

CAUSES:

Fever is a symptom, not a disease. It is a normal response to infections. Fever helps fight infections with the body's immune system. The usual fevers (100.4F to 104F) that all children get are not harmful. Most fevers with viral illnesses will last for 2 to 3 days.

HOMECARE:

1. Acetaminophen (Tylenol or generic) or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil or generic)

You can give any one of the acetaminophen products to children older than 2 months. Ibuprofen products can be given to children 6 months. A dosage chart based on weight for both is provided here. You only need to use medicines if the fever is above 101F and your child is also uncomfortable. Acetaminophen products can be given every 4-6 hours and ibuprofen products every 6-8 hours.

2. Cautions about aspirin

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children through the age of 21 not take aspirin if they have chickenpox or influenza (any cold, cough, or sore throat symptoms). Thus, most pediatricians have stopped using aspirin for fevers associated with any illness.

3. Sponging

Sponging is usually not necessary to reduce a fever. Never sponge your child without giving acetaminophen or ibuprofen first. Sponge immediately only in emergencies such as heat stroke, delirium, a seizure from fever, or any fever over 106F. In other cases, sponge your child only if the fever stays over 104F (40 degrees C) 30 minutes after your child has taken acetaminophen or ibuprofen. If you do sponge your child, do so in lukewarm water (85 to 90F). Sponging works much faster than immersion, so sit your child in 2 inches of water and keep wetting the skin surface. Do not sponge with alcohol.

4. Less clothing

Your child should wear as little clothing as possible, because most heat is lost through the skin. Do not bundle up your child; it will cause a higher fever.

Generally, if your child smiles, plays, and drinks adequate fluids, you do not need to worry about the fever; but you should **CALL THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE IF:**

- the temperature is 100.4F or higher in a baby under 3 months of age
- the fever goes over 104F, especially if it stays over 104F and your child is under 2 years old
- the fever lasts more than 24 hours without an obvious cause
- the fever lasts more than 72 hours

- you feel your child is getting worse

