

## Fever Instructions

Fever is not a disease but part of the many ways our body fights illness or infection. We are more concerned with how sick the child appears, than the actual height of the temperature reading. It is normal for body temperature to range from 97F to 100.4F (35.9C to 38C), and even with minor illnesses, children tend to have higher fevers than adults. If your child has a high fever, but is laughing and playing, there is little need to worry or even treat it. If, on the other hand, your child is uncomfortable or listless due to fever, lowering the temperature may make him more comfortable. Fever may normally cause fast breathing or rapid heart rate, however, this should normalize when the fever is lowered. Parents often worry that high fevers will cause brain damage, but brain injury only occurs if there is an underlying serious bacterial infection in the brain itself, which is prevented with routine childhood vaccinations against bacterial meningitis.

### **REMEMBER....ALWAYS contact your doctor for any of the following!**

- Baby under 2 months with a fever
- Ill appearing despite anti-fever remedies
- Child seems to be getting progressively worse with an illness
- Fever lasting more than 3 days without obvious cause
- Severe, persistent abdominal pain
- Stiff neck, especially associated with headache or vomiting

**A fever is present if:** Oral (by mouth) or rectal temperature is over or equal to 100.4F or 38C.

Mercury thermometers are no longer the preferred method of obtaining temperatures. Digital thermometers are inexpensive and fairly accurate. Ear or thermoscan thermometers may give falsely high readings, and do not obtain a good seal on infants' ears until they are 6-9 months of age.

For infants under 2 months, it is always best to undress them to a diaper for 10 minutes before taking the temperature, and verify any high oral or axillary temperature with a rectal temperature.

### **Ways to Treat Fevers at Home, and Appropriate Dosing Instructions:**

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol, or other brands) should always be tried first. It is the safest on the stomach and can be given every four hours, (max 4 times/24 hrs.). If you are faced with a vomiting child acetaminophen comes in a rectal suppository form (Feverall), and can be obtained from behind the pharmacy counter.
- Ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin brands) can also be used for fever or pain every 6-8 hours, but it is harder on the stomach, and should be limited to 3 times a day (with food, if possible). Also it is only used after 4-5 months of age.
- Sponging of the neck and forehead with lukewarm water may help lower the fever. Never use ice baths or alcohol to lower a fever.

## Fever Reducer Dosing in Children 2 months and older:

Weight (in pounds)	Acetaminophen Infant/Child elixir, 160mg/tsp	Ibuprofen Child Elixir (Motrin or Advil) 100mg/5 ml	Infant Ibuprofen DROPS (Motrin or Advil), 100 mg/2.5 ml
7-10	1/4 tsp = 1.25 ml		
11-15	½ tsp = 2.5 ml	½ tsp = 2.5 ml	1.25 ml
16-23	¾ tsp = 3.75 ml	¾ tsp = 3.75 ml	1.875 ml
24-28	1 tsp = 5 ml	1 tsp = 5 ml	2.5 ml
29-32	1 ¼ tsp = 6.25 ml	1 ¼ tsp = 6.25 ml	
33-42	1 ½ tsp = 7.5 ml	1 ½ tsp = 7.5 ml	
43-50	2 tsp = 10 ml	2 tsp = 10 ml	

- **Please note: 1 tsp = 5 ml, ¾ tsp=3.75 ml, ½ tsp = 2.5 ml, ¼ tsp = 1.25 ml**

### Myths about Fever

Many parents have unwarranted fears of harm from the moderate fevers that all children experience. This is called fever phobia. It leads to lost sleep, over-treatment, and unnecessary worry. Here are some widely held myths about fever.

- **Fever Causes Brain Damage: WRONG.** Natural fevers from viral and bacterial infections don't go above 105F, and do not cause brain damage.
- **Untreated Fevers will keep going higher, to 110 or 115F. WRONG.** Even untreated fevers stop at 105F, unless a child is trapped in a hot place like a car. The brain's thermostat keeps fevers from infections within a safe range.
- **Untreated fevers will cause seizures. WRONG.** Only 4% of children, generally under age 5, sometimes develop a brief seizure with fever, called "febrile seizures". While frightening, the seizures are brief and harmless. Febrile seizures generally cause no complications. More important is to evaluate the underlying cause of the fever so first time febrile seizure should be evaluated by a doctor.
- **Any Fever is bad for you. WRONG.** The ability to produce fever is present throughout the animal kingdom. Fever turns on the body's immune system and speeds up the production of white blood cells, antibodies, and natural infection-fighting agents. Fever also slows down the multiplication of viruses and bacteria. Present evidence suggests that fevers are beneficial and sometimes necessary for survival. Fever is not the enemy.