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Fever When to be Concerned

Fever = core body temperature of 100.4° F or higher when taken rectally.

- Tissue damage will not occur until an oral temperature of 107° F; however, sepsis is more likely with oral temperatures over 105° F.
- Children under 3 years old should be evaluated for fevers that reach 102.2° F.
- For infants under 3 months old, any fever (over 100.4° F, oral) is an emergency and should be immediately evaluated at an emergency department.

Converting Temperatures

- Rectal is the standard temperature
- Oral temperature add 1 degree = rectal
- Armpit temperature add 1.4 degrees = rectal
- Ear/temporal temperature is approximately equal to rectal

Do I need to Take my Child to the Doctor?

Fevers do not necessarily mean that your child is ill. For instance, many children will present with a low-grade fever while teething or after receiving a vaccination. This means that you DO NOT need to run to the doctor for every fever, nor do you need to treat all fevers.

Fevers only need to be treated when accompanied by red flags (see below), or in rare instances to help the child sleep. The reason behind not treating a fever is simple, a fever is your body's natural mechanism for KILLING PATHOGENS. By suppressing a fever by using an antipyretic drug, such as Motrin, you can actually make an illness worse and/or cause the illness to last longer.

Fever Red Flags

When a fever is accompanied by one, or more, of these signs/symptoms it is appropriate to treat a fever with antipyretic medication or see a doctor.

- Infant under 3 months old - emergency!
- Children 3 to 36 months who have an oral temperature of 101.2° F or a fever of 100.4° F that has extended past 3 days
- Children of ANY age that have a febrile seizure, most common from 3 months to 6 years.
- Fever that presents with a rash.
- Children of any age that have chronic medical conditions that may be exacerbated by fever.
- Children of any age whose oral, rectal, ear, or forehead temperature is 104° F or whose armpit temperature is 103° F.
- Fever accompanied by lethargy (failure to recognize caregiver, lack of eye contact, withdrawal).
- Fever accompanied by shortness of breath, confusion, or meningeal signs (unusually sensitive head or neck pain).

Periodicity of Fevers

Unfortunately, Fevers are frequently elevated in the evenings and lower, or even absent, during the day.

Is the Fever Rising or Falling?

Is the person cold and shivering? = fever is still rising.

Is the person red and appears hot? = fever is falling or steady.

Non-suppressive Fever Treatments:

- "Magic" Socks treatment
- Warm bath
- Homeopathics
- Warm fluids, never cold
- General immune support

Fever Lowering Treatments:

- Remove clothing
- Cool fluids, never cold
- "Magic" Socks treatment, only for a few minutes.
- Tepid bath
- Antipyretic herbs (White willow, Tilia, Melissa)
- Antipyretic meds (based on age)

NOTE: This information is not intended as medical advice. Please see your medical professional when appropriate.
