

March 2005

THE FACTS ABOUT FEVER

It's that time again cold and flu season. In addition to runny noses and coughing, many children are developing high fevers. Here is some important information about fever; what to do and when to worry.

What is a fever?

Fever is the body's natural way of fighting infection. It stimulates the immune system to fight the illness, and in general, bacteria and viruses do not grow well in high temperatures. Fever does not lead to brain damage or death. Some children will have convulsions, or seizures, with a high temperature, but these are usually short-lived and are not dangerous. A fever is usually defined as a rectal temperature greater than 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or an oral temperature greater than 100 degrees.

What to do when your child has a fever

It is not necessary to treat every fever. If your child is comfortable and able to drink liquids, leaving them to heal themselves may be the best therapy. Because some children do vomit when they spike a high temperature, and because high fevers can increase water demands, some children with fevers may be at risk for dehydration. If fever does cause discomfort or vomiting, then Acetaminophen (Tylenol or FEVERALL suppositories) or Ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil) may be given. Ibuprofen can only be used in children more than 6 months of age and should not be given to children within one month of their Varivax (chicken pox vaccine, usually given at the 12 month visit) or MMR (measles, mumps, rubella-usually given at the 15 month visit) vaccinations. Do not wake a child who is resting comfortably to give medication unless instructed by the health care provider. It is NOT recommended to alternate acetaminophen and ibuprofen. Acetaminophen is given every 4-6 hours. Ibuprofen is given every 6-8 hours. For older children, you may rely on the dosages that are printed on the packaging. For younger children we provide appropriate dosages on the information sheets given at well visits. Keep that information in a handy place. If you need dosage information you may call us- we will need to know your child's weight.

When to call the doctor

Fever itself will not harm your child and does not necessarily require treatment. But you should call us if:

1. Your child is under 3 months of age and has a rectal temperature of 100.4F or higher.
2. Your child is lethargic, not responding well to you, or is very fussy.
3. Fever has been present for longer than 2 days.
4. Your child has symptoms of sore throat, ear pain, abdominal pain, or pain when urinating.
5. Your child is drinking less than usual and has had fewer than 4 wet diapers in the past 24 hours or 2 urinations during waking hours.
6. Your child is having any trouble breathing or develops an unusual rash.

ENJOY IN GOOD HEALTH!

Pediatric Partners, S.C.
Highland Park Office
767 Park Avenue West
Suite 230
Highland Park, Illinois 60035
847-681-7100

Pediatric Partners, S.C.
Vernon Hills Office
870 West End Court
Suite 205
Vernon Hills, Illinois 60061
847-362-4155

<http://www.pediatricpartnerssc.com>