

## FEVER - HOW NOT TO PANIC

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**F**ever is not an illness. It is a normal response to help your child fight an illness. A fever is defined as:

**RECTAL TEMPERATURE 100.4 °F (38 °C) OR ABOVE**

**ORAL TEMPERATURE 99.5 °F (37.5 °C) OR ABOVE**

Rectal temperatures are the most accurate and preferred for children under age five. Oral temperatures are also accurate if taken correctly and are preferred for children over the age of five. Ear thermometers now used in many Pediatricians' offices and hospitals can be as accurate as rectal thermometers if used properly and has several advantages:

**PAINLESS \* REQUIRES NO COOPERATION \* RESULTS IN LESS THAN 2 SECONDS**

**E**very fever is not a sign of a serious illness. A high fever (over 104 °F or 40 °C) in general, isn't related to the seriousness of the illness. Always look for other symptoms

abdominal pain	headache
acts confused	irritability
appears very sick	lethargy
burning on urination	loss of appetite
difficult to awaken	neck stiffness
difficulty breathing	sore throat
difficulty swallowing	vomiting
ear pain	

The age of the child is also important. In infants less than 2 months of age, rectal temperatures greater than 100.4 °F may be cause for concern. At this age, infants may not manifest any other symptoms of serious illness, and need to be evaluated as soon as possible.

Between the ages of 6 months to 3 years, a small percentage of children with fever can develop a brief seizure. This type of seizure called a *benign febrile seizure*, is harmless

and does not cause brain damage. It is caused by a rapid rise in temperature, not by the height of the temperature itself.

**V**iruses cause the majority of fevers in children in all age groups. Most fevers that occur with viral illness range from 101 °F to 104 °F, and can last from 3 to 5 days. There is no treatment.

**E**very fever doesn't need to be treated. Fever reduction is given to make your child feel more comfortable only. There are 2 over the counter class of medications to control fever:

Acetaminophen ([Children's Tylenol®](#)) which is available in infant drops, liquid and chewable tabs. Dosages are according to child's weight, not age, and are given no more than every 4 hours. The drops are more concentrated than the syrup. You must read the instructions carefully. Do not mix and match droppers with the wrong syrup/drops.

Ibuprofen ([Children's Motrin®](#) or Advil®) is also available as Infant Drops, liquid and chewable tabs. It is given for higher temperatures greater than 102.5 °F and will last for up to 8 hours.

**ASPIRIN (Bayer®) should not be given to any child under the age of 18 with the Flu or Chicken Pox. This is due an association with the serious illness called Reyes Syndrome.**

Other treatments can also make your child feel more comfortable:

Tepid (warm water) sponge baths. **NEVER USE ALCOHOL** because it can be absorbed through the skin and cause alcohol toxicity.

Dress your child lightly, since most heat is lost through the skin.

Give extra fluid, since the body loses fluids through sweating, from increased heat.

**R**emember that fever is helping your child fight the infection. Fever in and of itself is not harmful to your child. It is not necessary to treat all fevers or to reduce the temp to normal. It is much more important to assess your child's behavior and to look for other symptoms. Fever is never a reason to panic, so remain calm, and remember that the fever can be beneficial to your child.