

Fever and its Treatment

What is a fever?

Fever is when the body temperature rises to a:

- Rectal temperature greater than 38.0C (100.4F) in children younger than 3 months of age
- Rectal temperature greater than 38.5C (101.3F)
- Oral temperature greater than 37.8C (100.1F)
- Axillary (armpit) temperature greater than 37.3C (99.1F)
- Please note that tympanic (ear canal) measurements are less accurate for determining fever.

Facts about fever

- Fever itself is not dangerous and helps the body fight infections.
- The degree (or height) of a fever does not tell you how serious the illness is. Your child's overall demeanor is generally the most important indicator of serious infection.
- Fever is commonly a result of a viral infection and will usually resolve spontaneously within a few days.
- If you can lower your child's temperature, your child may feel better.
- Convulsions with fever may rarely occur in children 6 months to 6 years old. They are not related to how high the fever is and are not usually dangerous. Please seek immediate medical attention if a seizure occurs.
- A child or teenager with a fever should not be given aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid, ASA). If the fever is due to chicken pox, influenza or certain other viral infections, taking aspirin can increase the risk of Reye's syndrome. This is a very serious condition that can damage the liver and brain.

Home care advice

- Give acetaminophen or ibuprofen (i.e. Tempra, Tylenol, Advil or Motrin) at the manufacturer's recommended dosage. Rectal suppositories of acetaminophen are available. Please ask your pharmacist or physician for the appropriate dose.
- Administering ibuprofen and acetaminophen in an alternating manner should not be routinely done.
- Take your child's temperature every 4-6 hours before giving medicine again.
- Dress your child in light clothing. Use only one light blanket to sleep.
- Give cool liquids in unlimited amounts. Solids are less important for now.
- Lukewarm baths may be given to help lower the temperature. The bath should be given approximately 1/2 hour after you have given medicine to lower his /her temperature. Do not use cold water. If your child shivers, stop the bath or increase the water temperature. Do not use alcohol rubs to lower his / her temperature.
- Keep your child home until 24 hours have passed without fever.

You should see your doctor if any of the following are present:

- Any infant less than 3 months old.
- Fever lasting more than 2 days.
- Your child is excessively cranky, fussy, inconsolable or irritable.
- A rash appears with the fever.
- Your child looks very sick to you. Trust your instincts.

(Sources: Montreal Children's Hospital, Children's Care Clinic, Pediatrics and Child Health)

Important

The information contained herein, is intended as a guideline and is for educational purposes only. If at anytime you are concerned about the well-being of your child, you should seek a medical opinion either at our office, or at the emergency room of your nearest hospital or the Montreal Children's Hospital.