

FEVER

DEFINITION

Your child has a fever if his/her rectal temperature is over 100.4° F (38.0° C)

Axillary thermometers can be used to screen for fever in infants less than 2 months of age. Temporal Artery thermometers and tympanic membrane "ear" thermometers, while not as accurate as rectal thermometers, may be used to screen for fever in children over 1 year of age.

The body's average temperature is 98.6° F (37° C), but it normally fluctuates during the day. Mild elevation (100.4° F or 38° to 38.5° C) can be caused by exercise, excessive clothing, a hot bath or hot weather.

CAUSES

Fever is a symptom, not a disease. Fever is the body's normal response to infections and plays a role in fighting them. Fever turns on the body's immune system. The usual fevers that all children get are not harmful. Most are caused by viral illnesses; some are caused by bacterial illnesses. Teething does not cause significant fever.

EXPECTED COURSE

Most fevers with viral illnesses range between 101° and 104° F (38.3° to 40° C) and last 2 to 3 days. In general, the height of the fever doesn't relate to the seriousness of the illness. How sick your child acts is what counts. Fever causes no permanent harm until it reaches 107° F (41.7° C). Fortunately, the brain's thermostat keeps untreated fevers below this level. Although most children get fevers, only 4% develop a brief febrile convulsion. Since this type of fever is generally harmless, it is not worth worrying about, especially if your child has had high fevers without seizures. Fevers over 102° F can make children uncomfortable and treating the fever can help children feel better.

HOME CARE

Acetaminophen Products for reducing fever. Children older than 2 months of age can be given any one of the acetaminophen products. Tylenol and Temptra are two brand names of acetaminophen.

Remember that fever is helping your child fight the infection. Use drugs only if fever is over 102° F (39° C) and preferably only if your child is uncomfortable. Give the correct dosage for your child's age every 4 to 6 hours, but no more often. Two hours after they are given, these drugs will reduce the fever 2° to 3° F. Medicines do not bring the temperature down to normal unless the temperature was not very elevated before the medicine was given. Repeated dosages of the drugs will be necessary because the fever will go up and down until the illness runs its course. If your child is sleeping, don't awaken him for medicines.

Caution: The dropper that comes with one product should not be used with other brands.

Dosages of Acetaminophen: See table below.

	Age	2-3 mos	4-11 mos	12-23 mos	2-3 yrs	4-5 yrs	6-8 yrs	9-10 yrs	11 yrs	12 yrs
	Weight	6-11 lbs	12-17 lbs	18-23 lbs	24-35 lbs	36-47 lbs	48-59 lbs	60-71 lbs	72-95 lbs	95 lbs & over
Infant's TYLENOL® Oral Suspension		1.25mL	2.5mL	3.75mL	5mL	—	—	—	—	—
Children's TYLENOL® Suspension		—	—	—	1 tsp or 5mL	1½ tsp or 7.5mL	2 tsp or 10mL	2½ tsp or 12.5mL	3 tsp or 15mL	—
Children's TYLENOL® Meltaway Tablets		—	—	—	2 tablets	3 tablets	4 tablets	5 tablets	6 tablets	—
Jr. TYLENOL® Meltaway Tablets		—	—	—	—	—	2 tablets	2½ tablets	3 tablets	4 tablets

tsp = teaspoon Take every 4 hours as needed. Do not exceed more than 5 doses in 24 hours.

Ibuprofen Products for reducing fever. Ibuprofen is approved for treating fever in children over 6 months of age. Advil and Motrin are two brand names for ibuprofen.

Ibuprofen and acetaminophen are similar in their abilities to lower fever, and their safety records are similar. One advantage ibuprofen has over acetaminophen is a longer lasting effect (6 to 8 hours instead of 4 to 6 hours).

Dosages of ibuprofen: See table below.

	Age	0-5 mos	6-11 mos	12-23 mos	2-3 yrs	4-5 yrs	6-8 yrs	9-10 yrs	11 yrs
	Weight	6-11 lbs	12-17 lbs	18-23 lbs	24-35 lbs	36-47 lbs	48-59 lbs	60-71 lbs	72-95 lbs
Concentrated MOTRIN® Infants' Drops		—	1.25mL	1.875mL	—	—	—	—	—
Children's MOTRIN® Suspension		—	—	—	1 tsp or 5mL	1½ tsp or 7.5mL	2 tsp or 10mL	2½ tsp or 12.5mL	3 tsp or 15mL
MOTRIN® Junior Strength Easy-to-Swallow Caplets		—	—	—	—	—	2 caplets	2½ caplets	3 caplets
MOTRIN® Junior Strength Chewable Caplets		—	—	—	1 tablet	1½ tablets	2 tablets	2½ tablets	3 tablets

tsp = teaspoon **Take every 6 to 8 hours as needed. Do not exceed more than 4 doses in 24 hours.**

Cautions about Aspirin: The American Academy of Pediatrics has recommended that children (through 21 years of age) not take aspirin if they have chickenpox or influenza (any cold, cough or sore throat symptoms). This recommendation is based on several studies that have linked aspirin to Reye's syndrome, a severe encephalitis-like illness. Most pediatricians have stopped using aspirin for fevers associated with any illness. **Caution:** A hidden source of aspirin that is commonly overlooked is Pepto-Bismol. Don't give your child Pepto-Bismol if he has a fever.

Sponging: Sponging is usually not necessary to reduce fever. Never sponge your child without giving him acetaminophen or ibuprofen first. Until acetaminophen has taken effect (by resetting the body's thermostat), sponging will just cause shivering, which is the body's attempt to raise the temperature. If you do sponge your child, sponge him in lukewarm water (85° to 90° F [29° to 32° C]). Sponging works much faster than immersion, so sit your child in 2 inches of water and keep wetting the skin surface. If your child shivers, raise the temperature or wait for the acetaminophen to take effect. Don't expect to get the temperature below 101° F (38.3° C). Don't add rubbing alcohol to the water. It can cause a coma if breathed in.

Extra Fluid: Encourage your child to drink extra fluids, but do not force him to drink. Popsicles and iced drinks are helpful. Body fluids are lost during fevers because of sweating.

Less Clothing: Clothing should be kept to a minimum because most heat is lost through the skin. Do not bundle up your child; it will cause a higher fever. During the time your child feels cold or is shivering (the chills), give him a light blanket.

CALL OUR OFFICE

IMMEDIATELY IF:

- Your child is less than 2 months old and has a fever of 100.5° F or greater
- Your child of any age has a fever of 105° F or 40.6° C or greater
- Your child is crying inconsolably
- Your child is difficult to awaken
- Your child's neck is stiff
- Any purple spots are present on the skin
- Breathing is difficult *and* no better after you clear the nose
- Your child looks or acts very sick (if possible, check your child's appearance 1 hour after your child has taken acetaminophen or ibuprofen)

WITHIN 24 HOURS IF:

- Your child is 2 - 4 months old (unless the fever is due to vaccines)
- The fever is between 104° and 105° F (40° to 40.6° C); especially if your child is less than 2 years old
- Burning or pain occurs with urination
- Your child has had a fever more than 24 hours without an obvious cause or location of infection

DURING REGULAR HOURS IF:

- Your child has had a fever for more than 72 hours
- The fever went away for more than 24 hours and then returned
- Your child has a history of febrile seizures
- You have other concerns or questions