



# Fever

## Patient and Family Education

**This teaching sheet contains general information only. Your child's doctor or a member of your child's health care team will talk with you about specific care for your child.**

**NOTE:** Contact your child's doctor if your child has a fever and also has:

- A chronic health problem
- Sees a doctor or specialist or needs medicines regularly
- Has a problem with his immune system
- Has had a urinary tract infection (UTI) in the past
- Is being treated for cancer or another serious health problem

### Fever Quick Tips

Fever is a common sign of illness in children.

- It is a normal response to an infection caused by a bacteria (germ) or virus. Fever usually goes away when your child's illness goes away.
- It can be controlled with medicines like acetaminophen or ibuprofen. These medicines do not "cure" the fever or the illness. They only make your child more comfortable.
- Never give your child aspirin or aspirin products such as baby aspirin, Pepto-Bismol, Goody's, BC powder or Alka Seltzer. Doing so may cause Reye's syndrome, a serious disease.

### What kind of symptoms does fever cause?

Your child may have one or more of these:

- Temperature over 100.3<sup>0</sup>F
- Flushed skin
- Increased heart rate
- Increased breathing rate, but is breathing easily and not having trouble breathing

**NOTE:** For babies less than 24 months old – take the temperature in the rectum (the opening where the bowel movement or stool comes out). Other methods are not as accurate in babies.

### Should I treat my child's fever?

In general, not all fevers need to be treated. Some reasons to treat a fever include if your child:

- Is not comfortable when the fever is high.
- Will not drink enough fluids when the fever is high.

### How do I treat a fever?

Some general guidelines for treating fever include:

- Dress your child very lightly. Do not bundle or cover with a blanket.
- For children over 12 months old, give extra water or cool liquids.
- For babies less than 12 months old, avoid giving extra water. Instead, use oral rehydration fluids such as Lytren, Pedialyte, Liquilyte or Infalyte or a less costly store brand.

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**

## Fever, continued

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- Give acetaminophen (Tylenol or other less costly store brand). Follow the directions on the box carefully or ask your child's doctor how much medicine to give.
  - **Do not give acetaminophen to babies under 3 months of age without a doctor's order.**
  - **Do not give your child more than 5 doses of acetaminophen in a 24-hour period.**
  - If your child has any type of liver problem, talk with his doctor before giving acetaminophen.

### OR

- Give ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil or other less costly store brand) every six hours. Follow the directions on the box carefully or ask his doctor how much medicine to give.
  - **Do not give ibuprofen to babies less than 6 months of age without a doctor's order.**
  - If your child has chickenpox, kidney problems or bleeding problems, talk with his doctor before giving ibuprofen.
  - Give this medicine with food or milk to decrease stomach upset.
- **Do not alternate these medicines – give one or the other.**
  - It may take 60 to 90 minutes for these medicines to work.
  - Check with your child's doctor or pharmacist before giving acetaminophen or ibuprofen with other medicines. This includes over-the-counter medicines like cough and cold medicines.
  - Tell your child's doctor if your child is taking any vitamins, herbal products or other supplements or home remedies.

### **When should I call the doctor?**

Call your child's doctor **right away** if your child has any of these:

- Does not smile or play for even a few minutes every four-hours
- Shows signs of dehydration (drying out):
  - No urine in six hours in an infant younger than 12 months old
  - No urine in more than eight hours in a child older than 12 months old
  - No tears when crying
  - Sunken eyes
  - Dry lips and mouth
- Vomits more than 2 times
- Is not comfortable, even when held
- Seems to be breathing hard or fast even after the fever has been treated with medicine
- Has a new rash not yet seen by a doctor
- Has fever that lasts more than three days
- Complains of any persistent pain such as earache, pain with voiding or stomach pain
- Complains of a stiff neck
- Has a headache that does not get better with medicine such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen
- For a baby less than 2 months old – has **any fever** and has not yet been checked by a doctor for fever
- For a baby 2-6 months old – has a **fever more than 102.2°F (rectally)** and has not yet been checked by a doctor for the fever.
- For a baby 6-24 months old – has a **fever more than 103°F (rectally)** and has not yet been checked by a doctor for the fever.

Also call if you have any concerns about how your child looks or feels.

### **When can my child return to daycare or school?**

Your child can return when he feels well enough to attend and when his fever is gone without using medicines.

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**