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FEVER GUIDELINES FOR INFANTS AND CHILDREN GREATER THAN THREE MONTHS OLD

Definition

- Rectal temperature greater than 100.4° F (Fahrenheit)
- Oral temperature greater than 99.5° F
- Axillary temperature (under the arm) greater than 99° F
- Ear temperature greater than 100.4° F (not reliable if your child is less than 6 months old)

Cause

- Fever is a symptom, not a disease.
- Fever turns on the body's immune system and is a normal response to infection.
- How sick your child acts, not the height of the fever, determines the seriousness of the illness.

Facts

- The body's average temperature is 98.6° F measured orally, but it normally fluctuates during the day.
- Common viral illnesses such as "colds" can cause fever ranging from 100° F to 104° F, and usually will last three to five days.
- With treatment, the body temperature usually comes down 2 – 3° F, not down to normal body temperature.
- Fevers from infection do not cause brain damage. Environmental temperatures (e.g. confined in a closed car in hot weather) can cause body temperature over 108° F and brain damage.
- About 4 % of children less than four years of age develop febrile seizures. They last less than five minutes and do not cause permanent harm such as epilepsy, brain damage, or learning disabilities. Frequently, a seizure is the first indication of a fever; therefore, it is difficult to anticipate. Constant worry about your child's temperature will only upset you and will not prevent seizures.
- Febrile seizures are almost always harmless, but inform your pediatrician of this event, for more information visit our Website at <http://www.fresnochildrens.com/files/Common Pediatric Conditions/febrileseizures.pdf>.

LESS THAN THREE MONTHS OLD:

- Call your doctor **immediately** if your child is less than 3 month old and has a fever

GREATER THAN THREE MONTHS OLD:

Call your doctor **immediately**:

- If his/her fever is over 105°F
- If your child looks or acts very sick, for example
 - Severe lethargy - too weak to cry or hard to awaken
 - Severe pain – cries when you touch her
 - Can't walk (if already knows how)
 - Tender abdomen
 - Labored breathing
 - Drooling – sudden onset is associated with difficulties swallowing
 - Stiff neck – unable to have chin to chest without pain
 - Purple spots

Home care for the infant/child greater than three months

- For dosages of acetaminophen and ibuprofen, please refer to the "Over the Counter Medication Guide" or go to www.fresnochildrens.com.
- Do not use aspirin. Aspirin given during certain viral illnesses has been linked to Reye's syndrome (severe encephalitis-like illness). Do not give Pepto-Bismol (contains aspirin) if your child has a fever.
- You may sponge your child. Use lukewarm water (85° F – 90° F) instead of cold water or rubbing alcohol.