



Share the Wellness Tip

February 8, 2013

Not So Hot

Like a sneeze or a yawn, a fever is a normal response for the body. It's a sign that the immune system is fighting an infection. But for many parents, a childhood fever may seem anything but natural. Your first reaction might be to try to immediately lower your child's body temperature. However, experts recommend more of a wait-and-see approach.

Behavior Trumps Temperature

A fever is one of the body's best defenses against illness. When bacteria or a virus attacks the body, an increase in temperature helps stop germs from thriving. In children, most fevers are harmless and won't cause long-term problems. A fever may even be beneficial by shortening the duration of an illness.

A child has a fever if his or her oral temperature is 99.5 degrees Fahrenheit or above. Children with a fever who are still active and eating and drinking well may benefit best from plenty of fluids and rest. If a child is visibly uncomfortable—achy, fussy, not sleeping well—parents can take steps to lower the fever.

At-Home Care

When your child has a fever, follow this advice:

- **Provide plenty of fluids for hydration.** Good choices include water, popsicles, clear soup, and gelatin. Avoid too much fruit juice or apple juice.
- **Be smart about bundling.** Too many layers may prevent a child's fever from decreasing, even if he or she has chills. One lightweight layer of clothing and one lightweight blanket are sufficient.
- **Give acetaminophen or ibuprofen, but only if your child is older than 6 months.** Check package instructions, the appropriate dose and ask your doctor about which over-the-counter medication is best for your child. **Never give your child aspirin for a fever.**
- **Try a lukewarm bath,** especially after giving fever-reducing medicine. Avoid cold or ice baths; they can cause a child to shiver, raising body temperature.

When should you call the pediatrician? It depends on your child's age. Call immediately if the fever climbs above 100.4 degrees (taken rectally) for children younger than 3 months, 101 degrees for children between 3 and 6 months, and 103 degrees for children 6 months and older. Also call if there are signs of a more serious illness, such as sore throat, earache, skin rash or severe headache.

Most health care providers recommend staying home until the fever has been gone for at least 24 hours.

You can do your part to help prevent the spread of the flu outbreak. If you or a family member is experiencing flu-like symptoms, including fever, you should contact your health care provider or local health department.

For more information on the influenza season and vaccinations, please visit Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Texas' [website](#).

Sources: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#); [National Institutes of Health](#)

