

Fever : When to worry

Often the first and most worrisome sign of illness is fever. However, rather than fear this symptom, recognize that it is the body's immunological response to infection, and plays a role in fighting illness. Parents often worry about the height of fever- it is rare that a fever caused by illness is high enough to cause damage to the body. Increased body temperatures caused by outside sources (heat stroke) are the most likely to cause harm. When fever is caused by infection, we worry more about the TYPE of infection. A fever of 101 caused by meningitis is much more worrisome than a fever of 105 brought on by a viral illness. When your child has a high fever, pay attention to their other symptoms- if they are lethargic or have trouble breathing, moving their neck, are persistently vomiting or seem unusually ill, then call us. If they have a sore throat and the sniffles, diarrhea, a mild cough, or simply have a fever and nothing else, treat their symptoms and bring them to see us if their fever persists more than a few days.

The only exception is in infants less than 2 months of age- any fever of 100.5 or higher merits immediate evaluation as often they may not exhibit others symptoms that indicate a bacterial infection.

Not all fevers need to be treated! There is some evidence that allowing a child to maintain a modest fever can help fight off illness faster. If your child has a temperature of 101 or less, consider using chicken soup and a cool bath instead of medication. If the fever is higher, your child is particularly uncomfortable, or it is bedtime and the fever appears to be rising go ahead and treat.

If necessary, refer parents to medication dosages on the website.