



Fever in Children



Overview

When your child has a fever, it can be scary. Should you be worried? Should you call the doctor? It's not always easy to know what to do. So let's take a moment to learn about fevers in children.

What is a fever?

First, what is a fever? Normal body temperature for a kid is between 97.9 and 99 degrees Fahrenheit (that's 36.6 to 37.2 degrees Celsius). We say your child has a fever when their temperature reaches 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius).

First line of defense

Why do we get fevers? Fever is one of the body's defenses against viruses and bacteria. These germs thrive at normal body temperature. To help kill them, the body raises its temperature. So in most cases, a fever is a sign that your child is fighting an infection.

When it's not a cause for concern

Fever is not always cause for alarm, though. If your child has a fever but is alert, responsive and drinking fluids and playing, they are probably OK.

Call a doctor

So, when should you call a doctor? Always call a doctor for fevers in infants younger than three months, because a fever at this age can be dangerous. For older kids, watch how they act. Are they listless, tired or irritable? Have they stopped drinking or peeing? Are they not acting like themselves? Call a doctor. You should also call a doctor if they have a high fever, if it lasts for more than three days, or if fever reducers aren't helping. And, trust your instincts. Always call a doctor if you have questions or concerns. Your doctor will create a plan that's right for your child.