

A brief but important talk on a “hot topic”: Your child’s fever

- ❖ Fever is the body’s natural way of fighting infection. It stimulates the immune system, and bacteria and viruses do not grow well in elevated temperatures.
- ❖ Fever is a sign of illness, not a disease.
- ❖ In some children, fever can be associated with a seizure or dehydration, but fever will not lead to brain damage or death.
- ❖ If fever causes discomfort to your child, you may give acetaminophen (____ mg every 4 hours, no more than 5 doses in 24 hours) or, if your child is older than 6 months, ibuprofen (____ mg every 6 hours, no more than 4 doses in 24 hours) **during waking hours** (do not wake up your child to give medication).
- ❖ Do not alternate acetaminophen and ibuprofen to treat fever.

When to call the doctor

Fever itself will not harm your child and does not necessarily require treatment. But you should call the pediatrician if:

- ✓ Your child is under 3 months of age and has a rectal temperature of 38° C (100.4° F) or higher.
- ✓ Your child is lethargic or irritable.
- ✓ Fever has been present for longer than three days.
- ✓ Your child also has symptoms such as sore throat, ear pain, abdominal pain, or pain when urinating.
- ✓ Your child is drinking less fluid than usual and has had fewer than four wet diapers in the past 24 hours or two urinations during waking hours.
- ✓ You are worried that your child is less active than normal or is having trouble breathing, whether or not he (she) has a fever.

Adapted from Rideout ME, First LR: Fever: Measuring and managing a sizzling symptom. *Contemporary Pediatrics* 2001;18(5):42