

FEVER

Parent Information

I. Assessment

A fever means the body temperature is above normal. A fever is a rectal, ear, oral or temporal artery Temperature of 100.4 F (38.0° C) or higher. Mild elevations can be caused by exercise, excessive clothing or a hot bath.

Fever is only a symptom of disease. Treating a fever does not kill the germs causing illness. In fact, fever plays a role in fighting infections. The height of the fever does not necessarily reflect the seriousness of the illness. Watching how sick your child acts is just as important as monitoring a fever. We recommend treatment of fever because it may help your child feel better.

For infants, toddlers and preschoolers, temperatures taken in the rectum are the most accurate. With proper attention and care, taking the temperature rectally is safe and causes little or no discomfort. Ear and temporal artery thermometers are not accurate in children less than 6 months of age. For children who are 5 years of age or older, temperatures taken orally may be more convenient and are generally reliable. Electronic thermometers with a digital display are preferred. If the thermometer is old, it may contain mercury and should be disposed of properly.

Recommended procedure for taking a rectal temperature:

- 1. Please read the instruction sheet included with your thermometer. Pay close attention to the manufacturer's instructions for safe use.*
- 2. Place your baby on his/her back or curled up on one side. Maintain a secure hold.*
- 3. Use a lubricant such as K-Y gel or Vaseline to lubricate the thermometer or the probe.*
- 4. Slide the thermometer gently into the baby's rectum until the tip is about one-half inch into the anal opening.*
- 5. Wait for 60-90 seconds, or until the thermometer beeps, before reading the temperature.*

II. Treatment

Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen are two fever-reducing medications. A dose appropriate for your child's weight may be given every 4-6 hours as needed for Acetaminophen. Acetaminophen is the generic name for Tylenol. Acetaminophen is also available in rectal suppository form for children who are having trouble taking oral medication.

Ibuprofen is the generic name for Advil and Motrin. It should be used only for children who **are 6 months of age or older**. Children who are dehydrated should not receive ibuprofen until the dehydration has been corrected. The recommended interval between doses is 6-8 hours.

Encourage fluids because high temperatures can cause dehydration. Avoid excessive clothing and bundling. It is ok to medicate your child prior to their appointment if they have a fever. We do not generally recommend combination cold & cough products that contain Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen because of the potential for unintentional overdose of medications.

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III. Instructions for fever after immunizations

Fever may be part of your child’s expected immune response to a vaccine. A fever after an immunization may last for 1 to 2 days and may be as high as 104° F. If your child has a fever of 104° F or higher or a fever lasting longer than 2 days, please call our office. If your child has signs of significant illness (see below), call our office. We do not recommend giving Acetaminophen or Ibuprofen prior to vaccines.

IV. Call our office immediately if:

- Your child is 3 months old or younger and has a fever of 100.4° F or higher (and has not received immunizations in the past 24-48 hours- see above)
- For fever of 105° F or greater in a child of any age.

V. Please call us during regular office hours for any of the following:

- Under 2 years old if fever has been greater than 24 hours without other symptoms.
- 2 years or older if fever has been greater than 72 hours.
- Any other concerns you may have regarding assessment or treatment of fever.

VI. Dosage guidelines for acetaminophen and ibuprofen:

ACETAMINOPHEN DOSAGE: Every 4-6 hours, as needed (all ages).

WEIGHT	Infant’s or Children’s Suspension (160mg/5ml)	Junior Strength Tablets (160mg)	Suppository (120mg)
6 – 11 pounds	1.25 ml		
12-17 pounds	2.5 ml		1 supp.
18-23 pounds	3.75 ml		1½ supp.
24-35 pounds	5 ml	1 tablet	2 supp.
36-47 pounds	7.5 ml	1½ tablets	

IBUPROFEN DOSAGE: Every 6-8 hours as needed. Avoid until age 6 months and older.

WEIGHT	Infant Drops 50mg/1.25ml	Children’s Suspension 100mg/5ml	Children's Chewable 100mg tablet
12-17 pounds	1.25 ml	2.5 ml	
18-23 pounds	1.875 ml	3.75 ml	
24-35 pounds	2.5 ml	5 ml	1 tablet
36-47 pounds	3.75 ml	7.5 ml	1½ tablets

Aspirin: Because of the risk of Reye syndrome, aspirin should **NEVER** be used to treat fever or other symptoms of acute illness in children or adolescents.

Dehydration: Treatment for dehydration should take priority over treatment for fever.

Alternating medications: There is no evidence that alternating acetaminophen and ibuprofen is more effective than giving either medication alone. There is evidence that dosages can get confused leading to an accidental overdose. **We do not recommend it.**

Please respect the published dosage intervals. It is dangerous to administer acetaminophen more frequently than every 4 hours or ibuprofen more frequently than every 6 hours.