

Fever, or elevated body temperature, is often a frightening symptom of illness. Almost always, fever results when a person's body is fighting an infection. Fortunately, most infections in children and adults are due to viruses, which may cause one to feel awful but are rarely dangerous.

**There are some facts about fever that you should know:**

1. Rectal temperature is the most accurate measurement of the body's core or internal temperature. Oral (mouth) or axillary (armpit) temperature may be the same as rectal temperature but are often lower. When reporting temperature to the doctor, do not adjust the results, but do tell the doctor where you measured it.
2. Body temperature varies with time of day and activity. The normal range is 98-100.3°F. The temperature is usually highest – in health and illness – in the late afternoon and early evening. Temperature less than 100.4°F should not be considered a fever.
3. Teething is often falsely blamed as a cause of fever in infants. If the temperature is over 100.3°F, teething is not the cause.
4. Fever itself does not cause brain damage. This is an old wives tale. Fever can occasionally cause a developing tooth later to erupt discolored or imperfectly formed.
5. The heart rate and breathing rate increase as temperature rises. Expect your child to breathe faster and his heart to beat faster when he has a fever.
6. Some children have high fever with almost every illness, even the minor ones.
7. The goal of treatment of fever is to attempt to make the child more comfortable. It is possible to do this without lowering the temperature, which is not always possible. We suggest the following approach:

Fever medicine is usually effective in easing discomfort and lowering the temperature. Do not give Ibuprofen to infants under 6 months.

Ibuprofen (such as Motrin) or Acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) often eases the pain of headache, muscle ache, or sore throat.

Do not alternate Acetaminophen and Ibuprofen.
8. Dress the child with a fever in light clothing. Layers of clothing are like insulation – they prevent irradiation of body heat into surrounding air.
9. For children over 1 year of age: Offer abundant fluids, such as water or pedialyte. Avoid artificially sweetened beverages. For children under 1 year of age: Offer water between formula or breast milk feedings.
10. If you are worried about your child, ask for an appointment. While we cannot yet cure a virus, we can usually reassure you that a serious infection is not the cause of your child's fever. If your child's fever lasts for more than three days (72 hours), call for an appointment. Call sooner if you're worried or your child is acting unusually sick (listless, not improving with fever medication, vomiting more than 24 hours, etc.).

Any infant less than 30 days old with a fever of 100.4°F or more should be examined as soon as possible.