

# Happy & Healthy Pediatrics

Pediatric, Adolescent, & Breastfeeding Medicine



## Fever

Fever is something that we see driving parents crazy with worry. Don't worry! Fever is part of our natural way of fighting infection. What always matters more to us as pediatricians, more than any number on the thermometer, is how the child is acting. Sick kids act sick. If your child is miserable, that is always a reason to make an appointment to have them be seen.

**TREAT THE CHILD, NOT THE NUMBER ON THE THERMOMETER.** The purpose of acetaminophen or ibuprofen is to make the child more comfortable, not to lower the number. If a child is acting normally and has a fever, we recommend not giving anything. Kids often get viral fevers that do not come down easily with medication. But that is not the purpose of the medication-its purpose is to make the child more comfortable. If your child is sleeping, but is feverish-DO NOT WAKE THEM to give acetaminophen or ibuprofen. If they are sleeping, we are assuming they are comfortable. Sleep is healing. Also, there is no need in retaking a child's temperature over and over. As long as they are comfortable, then they are ok.

Do not give both acetaminophen and ibuprofen to a child with a fever. It is OK to alternate both medications on a one-time basis, 3 hours apart, if you are having trouble making your child comfortable, but this should not be a recurrent procedure.

Temperature should be taken rectally in a child less than 6 months; ear thermometers should be used for children > 6 months. An oral thermometer is not appropriate until your child can hold it under their tongue for several minutes without biting (usually around 5 years old). Temporal artery thermometers or pacifier thermometers are usually inaccurate. **The definition of a fever is a temperature > 100.4 F.**

You have to take a rectal temperature in babies less than 2 months. No one likes to do it, but it is really no big deal. Put a little Vaseline on the tip of the thermometer and stick it in the tushie. The thermometers made now are all digital and give a reading within 3-8 seconds. They are shaped in a way you couldn't put it too far in the tushie-about ½ inch is all you need. **If the reading is equal to or greater than 100.4 F, AND YOUR CHILD IS LESS THAN 8 WEEKS OF AGE, call us right away**-even if it is 3am. Babies run warmer than we do. So if you take the temperature and it is 99 F or 100.2 F, don't worry-just keep an eye on it. You do not need to take the baby's temperature routinely-only if they feel warm to you or are not acting normally.

Never give acetaminophen or ibuprofen to an infant under 2 months of age. In addition, do not give ibuprofen to an infant under the age of 6 months.

Other treatments for a fever are to keep the child lightly dressed and offer plenty of fluids. Sponge bathe your child's face and arms with lukewarm water. Avoid ice or alcohol baths.

Please see our "Medication Dosing Handout" for more specific info for the dosing of **acetaminophen and ibuprofen**.