



Kapa'a Pediatrics LLC

Fever Facts

What is fever? Fever begins when body temperature is above 100.4F (38C). A fever is one of the ways our body protects itself against infections. When we have an infection in our body we release white blood cells to fight the infection. The white blood cells can release chemicals which increase the brain's "thermostat" resulting in a fever. The increased body heat helps us to fight the germs.

Debunking Fever Myths!

- Fever does NOT cause brain damage and does NOT cause illness.
- Fever does NOT cause a seizure disorder even if your child gets a febrile seizure.
- You CANNOT always prevent febrile seizures from occurring by treating a fever.
- Febrile seizures do NOT cause brain damage.

Why is fever important? Monitoring fevers helps us to manage your child's illness. When your child has a fever it is important to focus on the CAUSE of the fever, and not on what you can do to stop the fever. Most of the time the cause will not be serious, like a common cold, sore throat, vomiting and diarrhea, or ear infection.

How do I know if it is a serious infection? Usually, if your child has a serious infection, they will be having other major symptoms in addition to fever. Here are some examples of serious infections and how to use fever to monitor your child's illness.

- Children less than 2 months of age should be evaluated for every fever regardless of the cause since they may not show other symptoms despite being very ill. They are also more fragile and often need more of a work up to ensure that they do not have a serious bacterial infection. From 2-3 months of age we recommend calling us to at least go over all the symptoms to help decide if your infant should be seen.
- Pneumonia: Fever AND coughing, shortness of breath (breathing hard and fast), poor feeding.
- Meningitis: Fever AND headache, eye pain, stiff neck, lying very still not wanting to move head or neck.
- Urinary tract infection: Fever AND appearing very ill, poor feeding, possibly vomiting without diarrhea.



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Why do we treat fever? The main reason to treat fever is that fever often makes us feel uncomfortable. If your child has a high fever and appears uncomfortable then try a dose of Tylenol or Motrin. If your child is happy and running around with a 103F fever then you do not have to treat the fever. You must use your best judgment, but continue to focus on the whole picture and not just the fever. **NEVER GIVE ASPIRIN TO CHILDREN UNDER 20 YEARS OLD.**

When to seek care! Here are a few times when a fever should be brought to medical attention.

- Children <3 months old should be brought in, see above.
- Fever for 72 hours and NO other symptoms.
- Fever and rash at the SAME time..
- Most common colds typically only have a fever at the start, despite the other symptoms of the cold lasting for 13 days. Evaluation is needed if (1) fever lasts longer than 3 days, (2) fever that goes away for more than 24 hours then comes back again, (3) fever that occurs late, after 3 days, into a respiratory illness.

Febrile seizures! Simple febrile seizures occur in about 24% of children. These seizures usually last a few minutes, are very scary for the parents to watch, but are generally harmless. They do NOT cause brain damage and it is unlikely that you can prevent them by giving Tylenol or Motrin. If your child has a febrile seizure turn them on their side until it finishes. If it lasts for more than 5 minutes call 911, otherwise you may call your doctor.

*** Patient handouts created by Kapa'a Pediatrics are intended to give parents the most common and pertinent facts about a certain issue. If there is ever any concern that your child was given an incorrect diagnosis or is not following the usual expected course for an illness please call us to speak with a physician. (808) 634-8011***