

Comprehensive Family Care Center  
Family Practice and Obstetrics

Alfred D. Arline, M.D.  
Kern Low, M.D.  
Steven L. Milligan, M.D.  
Ronald M. Palm, D.O.  
Shirley U. Salvatore, M.D.

Louise E. Schottstaedt, M.D.  
Laura A. Stein, M.D.  
Lynn M. Strangc, M.D.  
B. Leigh Vall-Spinosa, M.D.



2002 Lake Avenue, Suite D  
Pueblo, Colorado 81004  
719-562-1122  
719-562-0244 - Fax

## High Temperature (Fever) in Children

If your child has a high temperature (fever), then give them some acetaminophen or ibuprofen, take off their clothes, and give them lots to drink. See a doctor if they do not improve.

### What causes high temperatures?

- **Viral infections** are the common cause. Virus infections cause such things as colds, coughs, 'flu, diarrhea, etc. Sometimes they cause serious illnesses.
- **Bacterial infections** are less common than viral infections, but also cause high temperatures. Bacteria are more likely to cause serious illness such as pneumonia and meningitis.
- **Other types of infection** are uncommon causes of a high temperature.

### What should I do?

- **Give acetaminophen or ibuprofen.** You can buy these in liquid form for children. They come in various brand names.
- **Take the clothes off the child** if the room is normal 'room temperature'. IT IS WRONG TO WRAP UP A FEVERISH CHILD.
- **Give lots of cool drinks.** This helps to lower the temperature and prevents dehydration.

Do not 'cold-sponge' a feverish child. This used to be popular, but it is now not advised. The blood vessels under the skin may 'clamp down' if the water is too cold. Heat may then be trapped in deeper levels of the body and make the child worse. Many children also find cold sponging uncomfortable.

Some people use a fan to cool a child. Again, this may not be a good idea if the fanned air is too cold. A gentle flow of air in a room, which is 'room temperature', may be helpful. Perhaps just open the window, or use a fan on the other side of the room to keep fresh air circulating.

## **What should I look out for?**

A hot, feverish child may look quite unwell. He or she may be flushed, irritable, and uncooperative. However, most bouts of high temperature are not caused by serious illness, and the temperature often comes down quickly. It is quite common to see a child happily playing an hour or so later when their temperature has come down. They will not be entirely back to normal, but it is reassuring if a child improves with the drop in temperature.

As a rule, a child with a serious infection will usually become worse, and more ill, despite efforts to bring their temperature down. In addition, they may have other worrying symptoms such as breathing problems, drowsiness, convulsions, pains, or headaches, which become worse despite acetaminophen or ibuprofen.

See a doctor if a child does not improve soon, or has any other worrying symptom.