

## Information About Fever

Many parents believe that fever is dangerous, and that there is a magical temperature that, once reached, will harm their child. This might have been true at one time when we saw lots of meningitis and blood infections. Now, thanks to vaccines (particularly the Haemophilus vaccine (HIB) and the pneumococcal vaccine (Pevnar)), those are almost illnesses of the past. Fever is a symptom that something is going on, and your child will likely feel more comfortable if their temperature is reduced, but it is rarely dangerous in and of itself.

If your child is under two months of age, fever **is** a serious problem. We need to know if your infant less than two months of age has a temperature above 100.5 degrees ([converting Fahrenheit to Centigrade](#)). Do not treat with Tylenol or Ibuprofen. At this young age, we need to know if your baby has a fever, and need to address the cause of the fever rather than having you suppress the fever.

Over two months of age, it is appropriate to treat fever, mostly to make your child more comfortable.

There are four ways you can treat your child's fever. First, you can treat with acetaminophen (Tylenol). Second, you can treat with Ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin). The accompanying chart ([dosing for acetaminophen and ibuprofen](#)) lists doses of acetaminophen and ibuprofen based on your child's weight. Third, you can alternate these medicines every three hours if need be. And fourth, you can sponge off your child's head and hair, chest, and back with body temperature water. The evaporation process will help cool them off. Do not use alcohol, and do not sponge them off with cold water.

When you give a medicine like Tylenol or Ibuprofen, it probably takes about an hour for it to be absorbed into your child's body and to start to work.

When should you be concerned about fever? It isn't the height of the fever that concerns us, it is how your child responds to treatment for the fever and how they look once their temperature comes down that is more important. If you are doing all the appropriate things (giving correct doses of Tylenol and Ibuprofen, alternating these medicines, sponging off you child over and over) and you cannot get the temperature to come down below 101 degrees, then there might be something more serious going on and it would be appropriate to have your child seen. Second, if you can get the temperature to come down below 101 but you think your child does not look well (they are irritable, they do not respond well, they are unusually sleepy, etc.) then there might be something more serious going on and they should probably be seen. Finally, if your child has had a fever for 2-3 days or more and it is not clear what is causing the fever, then it might be a good idea to have them seen. Certainly any young child with a fever for five days with no obvious explanation should be seen.