

Everyone has their own internal “thermostat” that regulates body temperature. Normal body temperature is around 98 degrees Fahrenheit plus/minus about one degree (37 degrees Celsius plus/minus about 0.6 degrees).

When the body detects an infection or other illness, the brain responds by raising the body temperature to help fight the condition. In this respect, fever is a positive sign that the body is protecting itself. By itself, fever is not an illness. Rather, it is a sign or symptom of illness. However, fever can make your child uncomfortable. It increases the need for fluids and speeds up heart rate and breathing. Fever itself is not dangerous. Even a high fever up to 104 or 105 will not cause brain damage or other permanent injury.

Fever can be treated with acetaminophen and/or ibuprofen in order to make the child more comfortable and allow them to drink in order to stay hydrated. Once the medicine wears off, the fever will return. Acetaminophen and ibuprofen treat only fever, they do not treat the cause of fever. Your child’s normal temperature will vary with age, activity, and time of day. Infants tend to have higher temperatures than older children, and everyone’s temperature is highest between late afternoon and early evening and lowest between midnight and early morning.

The height of a child’s fever is not always the best indicator of whether the child needs to be treated and/or evaluated. Instead, it is important to note how a child behaves and appears. If a child is over 1 year old, is eating and sleeping well, and has playful moments, there is usually no need to call the doctor immediately. Fever is usually accompanied by other symptoms such as severe sore throat, a severe earache, a cough, an unexplained rash, or repeated vomiting or diarrhea. Also, if your child is very fussy or sleeping more than usual. These symptoms need to be evaluated by a doctor.

When to call our office:

- If your child is two months or younger and has a rectal temperature of 100.4 F (38 C) or higher, call your pediatrician immediately. This is an absolute necessity.
- If your child is between 3-6 months old and has a fever of 101 degrees F (38.3 C) or greater.
- If your child is older than 6 months and has a temperature of 103 F (39.4 C).
- A child of any age who has had a temperature of 101 F or higher for 5 days or more.