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## Fever: Myths and Facts

*These are general guidelines for children  $\geq$  6 months.  
As always, please consult your doctor if you have concerns about your child.*

Misconceptions about the dangers of fever are commonplace. Unwarranted fears about harmful side effects from fever cause lost sleep and unnecessary stress for many parents. The following FACTS will help you put fever into perspective:

**MYTH:** All fevers are bad for children.

**FACT:** Fevers “turn on” the body’s immune system. Fever is one of the body’s protective mechanisms.

Most fevers are “good” for children and help the body fight infection. Use the following guidelines to help put your child’s level of fever into perspective:

**100<sup>0</sup> – 102<sup>0</sup> F Low grade fever: Beneficial. Try to keep the fever in this range.**  
(37.8<sup>0</sup> – 39<sup>0</sup> C)

**102<sup>0</sup> – 104<sup>0</sup> F Moderate grade fever: Beneficial**  
(39<sup>0</sup> – 40<sup>0</sup> C)

**Over 104<sup>0</sup> High fever: Causes discomfort, but is generally harmless.**  
(40<sup>0</sup> C)

**Over 105<sup>0</sup> High fever: Higher risk of bacterial infection.**  
(40.6<sup>0</sup> C)

**Over 108<sup>0</sup> Rare, but serious fever: The fever itself may be harmful.**  
(42<sup>0</sup> C)

**MYTH:** Fevers cause brain damage or fevers  $>$  104<sup>0</sup>F (40<sup>0</sup>C) are dangerous.

**FACT:** Fevers with infections don’t cause brain damage. Only body temperatures over 108<sup>0</sup>F (42<sup>0</sup>C) can cause brain damage. The body temperature goes this high only with high environmental temperatures (heat exhaustion, heat stroke, being left in a hot car).

**MYTH:** Anyone can have a seizure triggered by a fever (febrile seizure).

**FACT:** Less than 4% of children have febrile seizures.

**MYTH:** Febrile seizures are harmful.

**FACT:** Although febrile seizures are scary to watch, they usually stop within 5-15 minutes. They cause no permanent harm. Children who have had febrile seizures are at no greater risk of having developmental delay, learning disabilities or future seizure disorders.

**MYTH:** All fevers need to be treated with fever reducing medicine.

**FACT:** Only fevers that cause discomfort need to be treated with fever reducing medicine.

**MYTH:** Without treatment, fevers will keep getting higher.

**FACT:** This is incorrect as the brain has an internal thermostat that helps to keep fevers in check.

**MYTH:** With treatment, fevers should come down to normal.

**FACT:** With treatment, fevers are reduced but not always eliminated.

**MYTH:** IF the fever can't be reduced, the cause is serious.

**FACT:** Fevers that don't respond to fever medicines can be caused by viruses or bacteria. Whether the medicine works or not is not related to the seriousness of the infection.

**MYTH:** If the fever is high, the cause is serious.

**FACT:** If the fever is high, the cause may or may not be serious. If your child looks sick, the cause may be more serious.

**MYTH:** The exact number of temperature is very important.

**FACT:** How your child looks is MUCH more important than the exact number of the fever.

**MYTH:** Temperatures between 98.7°F and 100°F (37.1°C – 37.8°C) are low-grade fevers.

**FACT:** The normal temperature changes throughout the day. The above values are an elevated temperature not a fever. Temperatures peak in the late afternoon and evening. A low-grade temperature is between 100°F and 102°F (37.8°C – 39°C).