

FEVER

Fever is defined as “elevation of temperature above the normal.” Normal is a subject of debate, a range. Low grade fever is 99.5 to 101 F orally; moderate fever is 100 – 102 F. and high is over 102. For school purposes students are sent home, or should stay home with fever over 100. Fever is a symptom of illness. Fever is developed in response to a disruption of the balance of the body’s production of heat and heat loss. This balance is disturbed by an inflammatory process or infection.

Fever in Respiratory Infection: Fever may reach 103 – 105 degrees. Often fever is the first sign of infection. Fevers this high may cause febrile seizures, which are most common in younger children, under 3 or 4 years of age.

Fever in Influenza: Influenza is a respiratory illness caused by a virus. Sudden onset of fever is one of the hallmarks of influenza. Prolonged fever or appearance of fever during recovery from illness: this may be a sign of a secondary bacterial infection, for which an antibiotic may need to be prescribed.

Fever in Otitis Media (Ear Infections are one of the most prevalent illnesses of childhood) are usually the result of blocked Eustachian tubes, and secondary to a cold. When Eustachian tubes are blocked, and contain fluid, the environment is warm and moist – the ideal environment for the growth of bacteria, which causes ear infections. Temperatures, as high as 104 degrees, are common in ear infections. Tylenol (acetaminophen) or Motrin (Ibuprofen) should be given to reduce fever and relieve pain, and antibiotics are usually prescribed. Although, the current thinking in school age children is to withhold antibiotics for a few days to allow the body’s own defenses to try to fight the bacteria. Aspirin should not be given to children to treat fever, because of the risk Reyes Syndrome.

Fever in Strep Sore Throat: Strep sore throat is a kind of acute pharyngitis. It has an abrupt onset of painful throat, fever, headache and in small children, stomach pain. Tonsils and throat may be very red with white exudate (pus) which usually appears on the second day of illness. Most pharyngitis is viral, but strep throat is bacterial, which makes it readily treatable with antibiotics. Strep is diagnosed at the doctor’s office with a simple throat swab.

Fever in immunization reactions: As a usually mild side effect, most childhood immunizations can cause low grade fever. This reaction is usually brief, lasting only a day or so.

Fever should be managed with Tylenol or Ibuprofen, for the comfort of the patient. Children with fever should be kept home until they are fever free for 24 hours.