



Fever

MU Patient Education Series

Definition:

A fever is usually a sign that something out of the ordinary is going on in your body. Fever is the body's defense against germs.

TEMPERATURE RANGES:

Fever is the temporary increase in the body's temperature in response to some disease or illness.

A child has a fever when the temperature is at or above one of these levels:

- 100.4 °F (38 °C) measured in the bottom (rectally)
- 99.5 °F (37.5 °C) measured in the mouth (orally)
- 99 °F (37.2 °C) measured under the arm (axillary)

An adult probably has a fever when the temperature is above 99 - 99.5 °F (37.2 - 37.5 °C) (depends on the time of day).

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF FEVER MAY INCLUDE:

- Sweating
- Shivering
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Loss of appetite
- Dehydration
- General weakness



HIGH FEVERS BETWEEN 103 F (39.4 C) AND 106 F (41.1 C) MAY CAUSE:

- Hallucinations
- Confusion
- Irritability
- Convulsions (seizure activity)
- Dehydration

FACTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT FEVER:

- Your normal body temperature varies throughout the day
- It's lower in the morning and higher in the late afternoon and evening
- Normal temperature can range from about 97 F (36.1 C) to 99 F (37.2 C)
- Body temperature may vary by a degree or more

THINGS THAT AFFECT BODY TEMPERATURE:

- Menstrual cycle
- Heavy exercise
- Physical activity
- Strong emotion
- Heavy eating
- Heavy clothing
- Medications
- High room temperature
- High humidity

WHAT ARE SOME CAUSES OF A FEVER?

Any infection:

- Pneumonia
- Abscesses
- Urinary tract infection
- Cold
- Flu
- Ear infections
- Sinus infections
- Bacterial infections
- Viral infections Teething (in babies)



Autoimmune disorder or inflammatory disorders:

- Arthritis
- Lupus
- Ulcerative colitis

TREATING A FEVER:

- Drink plenty of fluids water, juices or broth
- Child under age 1, consider an oral rehydration solution
- Children may also enjoy popsicles
- Rest
- Dressing in light clothing
- Keep the room temperature cool
- If using a cover use only a sheet or light blanket
- Soak in lukewarm water. Especially for high temperatures, a lukewarm five- to 10-minute soak or a sponge bath can be cooling

***If the bath makes the person shiver, stop the bath and dry off as shivering raises the body's internal temperature — shaking muscles generate heat.

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