



## Fevers in Children

### Your health is important.

Because the Youens and Duchicela Clinic believes this, the following is brought to you in an effort to provide wellness information that you can use to help manage and maintain your health.

### This week, the focus is on fevers in children.

A fever in a child can be concerning for adults, especially when the child is too small to communicate his/her needs. However, with a bit of knowledge, parents and other caregivers can gain confidence in recognizing and treating fevers in children.

A fever is when the body temperature of an individual registers above "normal." According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, what is considered a "normal" temperature for a child will vary based on age, activity, and the time of day. Ordinarily, however, an oral reading of 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit or a rectal reading of 99.6 degrees is considered "normal." An oral reading above 99.5 or a rectal reading above 100.4 in children generally indicates a fever.

Whenever a fever is suspected, it is best for a caregiver to actually take the temperature of the child with a thermometer, for a time of two minutes. Feeling the skin or using temperature-sensitive tape is not accurate, especially if the child is experiencing a chill. A doctor will also ask for a temperature reading if a call is placed to seek medical attention, so having an accurate temperature is ideal.

A fever in itself is not cause for alarm, as an isolated fever is not an illness; rather, it is a positive sign that the body is fighting infection. Fevers, however, can be uncomfortable for children, and they will increase the heart rate and make the breathing of the child faster. These increases will cause a child to lose fluids, and extreme fluid loss can lead to dehydration; thus, it is important to replace the loss with clear fluids like Pedialyte and water.



Even so, reactions to fevers will vary in children. If a child is eating and sleeping well, has playful moments, and is not showing other symptoms such as a sore throat, cough, or earache, there usually is no immediate need to call a doctor. Instead, using home treatment methods (such as giving over-the-counter acetaminophen medications, applying cool water sponging, encouraging extra fluid intake, and keeping the child comfortable) may be best.

However, if a fever persists for more than twenty-four hours or if the child has a history of convulsions associated with fevers, it is best to contact a doctor. Additionally, these guides should be followed in contacting a doctor immediately:

- **if younger than three months with a temperature of 100.2 degrees or more**
- **if between three and six months with a temperature of 101 degrees or more**
- **if older than six months with a temperature of 103 degrees or more**

Such a high temperature can indicate a serious infection, which may require immediate medical treatment.

Monitoring children, listening to their needs, and investing in a good thermometer are smart steps for any caregiver in helping to ensure that fevers are diagnosed and attended to appropriately.

*The information provided here is not to be used as a substitute for medical attention. Remember that, should you have specific medical questions or desire more information, contact your doctor.*