

# HEALTH SOURCE



## Facts about childhood fever



Fevers scare many parents. When a child's temperature rises, it can induce panic and helplessness. But when parents recognize that fevers are oftentimes not incredibly harmful to children, that recognition can reduce panic and overreliance on fever-reducing medication.

If a child is healthy, a fever does not necessarily indicate anything serious. A fever is a rise in temperature initiated by the hypothalamus in the brain, which acts as the body's internal thermostat. The average body temperature is 98.6 F (37 C), but if body temperature is measured consistently throughout the day, this temperature will fluctuate. In fact, body temperature is often lower in the morning and higher in the middle of the day.

In many cases, the hypothalamus raises body temperature as the result of an infection or illness, according to the Nemours Foundation for Children's Health. It is believed that making the body less hospitable to viruses and bacteria helps reduce their propensity to grow and multiply.

A fever is often a good indicator that a person is sick, which can sometimes be difficult to determine if there are no apparent symptoms. This can



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parents and doctors discover what is triggering the fever.

For parents of toddlers and older children, a fever of 103 F or less is generally nothing to run to the doctor about. There is no inherent harm in letting the fever run its course, and it can actually prove beneficial in fighting the viral or bacterial illness that is causing the fever in the first place.

If your child is a newborn, a fever of 101 F or higher can be considered a medical emergency and should be evaluated by a doctor right away. Youngsters ages 7 weeks to 3 months should be brought to a doctor immediately if they have a fever of 101 or higher.

If a child has a fever of 104 or higher and his or her body temperature will not come down to 101 or 102, even with treatment, this is a cause for concern. This guideline, courtesy of renowned childhood medical expert Dr. Sears, can help parents determine if their child's body temperature is something they should be concerned about.

\* Normal temperature - 97 to 99 degrees (36 to 37.2 Celsius).

\* Low-grade fever - 99 to 100.9 degrees (37.3 to 38.3 Celsius).

\* Common fever - 101 to 103.5 degrees (38.4 to 39.7 Celsius).

\* High fever - any fever over 103.6 degrees (39.8 Celsius).

Most pediatricians agree that a fever should not be treated with

acetaminophen or ibuprofen if it is not making a child extremely uncomfortable. These medications can be used if the child has pain or is complaining about how they feel about the fever. Acetaminophen is used every 4 hours while ibuprofen lasts a little longer and is given every 6 to 8 hours.

When checking fevers, parents often wonder which thermometer is best. While some parents employ the lips-on-the-forehead method, there are more accurate methods of determining temperature readings.

\* Glass rectal or oral/underarm thermometers: These have been around the longest and have a proven record of accuracy. They do take the longest to read a temperature and can be difficult when dealing with fidgety kids.

\* Ear thermometer: This quick and easy thermometer has become a favorite method. But accuracy can vary, giving different readings from each ear.

\* Temporal thermometer: Another quick method, this thermometer is swept across the temporal artery in the forehead and has a better accuracy rating than the ear thermometer.

**Fevers can be scary for parents  
who don't realize they're a natural  
bodily process to fight illness.**





# DID YOU KNOW?

Arthritis is a debilitating condition that affects mobility within a person's joints. There are more than 100 different types of arthritis. It is estimated that there are around 50 million people in America with doctor-diagnosed arthritis or a similar joint disease. There are about 4 million Canadians who have arthritis, and it is estimated that, by 2026, more than 6 million Canadians age 15 and older will have arthritis.

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# Treatment options abound for arthritis sufferers

*Arthritis affects millions of people and can be a debilitating condition that impacts a person's mobility and quality of life. The March 2010 issue of Arthritis Care & Research revealed that 18.7 percent of Americans and 16.9 percent of Canadians suffer from some type of arthritis.*

The word "arthritis" refers to more than 100 separate medical conditions that affect the musculoskeletal system and specifically the joints. According to the Arthritis Foundation, arthritis-related joint problems cause pain, stiffness, inflammation and damage to joint cartilage (the tough, smooth tissue that covers the ends of the bones, enabling them to glide against one another) and surrounding structures. Such damage can lead to joint weakness, instability and visible deformities that, depending on the location of joint involvement, can interfere with the most basic daily tasks, including walking, climbing stairs, using a computer keyboard, cutting food, or brushing teeth.

Arthritis has no cure, though medications and physical therapy may be prescribed to help manage pain and improve mobility. There are many different medicines that may be used to treat arthritis. Here is a look at some of the most common.

### **Topical pain relievers**

These drugs are applied to areas of concern and are absorbed by the body to relieve pain. They are generally effective for people who have mild symptoms in just a few areas of the body.

### **Anti-inflammatory pain relievers**

These pain medicines may be over-the-counter or prescription drugs. Ibuprofen and acetaminophen are common painkillers, as are nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, or NSAIDs. Prescription doses may be helpful for more painful symptoms.

### **Narcotic pain relievers**

For pain that is not controlled by NSAIDs and other methods, arthritis sufferers may be prescribed narcotic drugs that are more potent. While effective, narcotic drugs are addictive. They also may cause side effects, including constipation.

### **Antidepressants**

Some doctors prescribe antidepressants to relieve pain. It is not fully understood how the medications affect the body's interpretation of pain, but the role of these drugs on brain chemicals may be the connection. Drowsiness and dry mouth may occur from these drugs.

### **Steroids**

For a variety of reasons, steroids are very useful at reducing inflammation in the body. But prolonged use -- especially when taken orally -- can result in a number of side effects, including weight gain and acne breakouts. Doctors try to avoid these problems by injecting the steroid into the affected joint or trying other medications in combination with steroids to keep the dose of steroids as low as possible.

### **Disease-Modifying**

#### **Antirheumatic Drugs (DMARDs)**

These drugs are often used for diseases of the autoimmune system, especially rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis or ankylosing spondylitis. These medications work by interfering with or suppressing the immune system that attacks its own joints in people with these conditions. These medications can cause serious side effects because they essentially slow down the body's ability to fend off illnesses. But for some people they are the best plan of attack for symptoms.

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