



PEDIATRIC HEALTHCARE UNLIMITED

Myths About Fever | A sample message from the Parent Advice Line telephone system

Fever is one of our most overrated symptoms. Many parents have unwarranted fears of harm from the moderate fevers that all children experience. This is called fever phobia. It leads to lost sleep, overtreatment, and unnecessary office visits. Here are some widely held myths about fever.

Fever causes brain damage. *Wrong.* The brain is not harmed unless the fever goes above 108° F. and natural fevers from viral and bacterial infections don't go above 105° F.

Untreated fevers will keep going higher, to 110° or 115° F. *Wrong.* Even untreated fevers stop at 105° F, unless a child is trapped in a hot place like a car or is overdressed. The brain's thermostat keeps fevers from infections within a safe range.

Untreated fevers will cause seizures. *Wrong for 96% of children.* Only 4% of children sometimes develop seizures with fever. While frightening, the seizures are brief and harmless. Febrile seizures cause no complications.

Any fever is bad for you. *Wrong.* The ability to produce fever is present throughout the animal kingdom. Fever turns on the body's immune system and speeds up the production of white blood cells, antibodies, and natural infection-fighting agents. Fever also slows down the multiplication of viruses and bacteria.

Present evidence suggests that fevers are beneficial and sometimes necessary for survival. When your child has an infection, one of our treatment goals is keeping the fever between 100° and 102° F, not eliminating it. Fever is not the enemy.

If you have other questions about fever, please consult your health-care provider for advice.