Fever in Children

Pre-reading

Questions: Why do fevers happen? When are fevers a concern? What do you do when you or your child has a fever?

Definitions: Immunization – a vaccination to protect against sickness or disease that is typically administered through an injection Lukewarm – slightly warm, not cold or hot Seizure – an attack caused by an illness or condition that often makes the body convulse or shake

Reading

When the body temperature rises above normal, a fever occurs. Fevers fight off infection in the body. Most fevers are not harmful, but can last 2 to 3 days. Children get fevers more often than adults. Sometimes children can get a fever following an immunization, but this is usually not a cause for worry.

Thermometers measure fevers. A thermometer can be purchased anywhere there is a pharmacy. The body’s temperature is different depending on when and how you measure it. Normal body temperature is 98.6°Fahrenheit (37.0°Celsius) when taken by mouth. A fever is present if:

- The rectal (butt opening) temperature is over 100.4°Fahrenheit (38.0°Celsius)
- The oral (by mouth) temperature is over 99.5°Fahrenheit (37.5°Celsius)
- The armpit temperature is over 99.0°Fahrenheit (37.2°Celsius)
- The ear temperature is over 100.4°Fahrenheit (38.0°Celsius)

There are different things that can be done to take care of a fever. Since fevers work in the body to fight off infection, medicine should only be given if needed. For example, if the oral temperature is over 102°Fahrenheit (39°Celsius), Acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or Ibuprofen (Advil®) may be given. Medicine bottles should be read carefully. It is important to know how much of the medicine should be given and how often. If a child is under the age of 2 years, a doctor should be contacted regarding the proper dosage. Aspirin is dangerous for children. Never give a child aspirin.

When a child has a fever, he or she needs to stay well hydrated. The child should drink a lot of healthy liquids like water, milk or 100% juices. Also, light clothing should be worn in order to keep the body temperature down. If the fever is still over 104.0°Fahrenheit (40.0°Celsius) 30 minutes after medicine is given, the child should be given a sponge bath. A sponge bath involves sponging off a child in a bathtub with a few inches of lukewarm water. Neither cold water nor ice should be used.

Finally, it is important to know when to call a doctor. A doctor should be contacted right away if a child less than 3 months of age has a fever; if a child’s fever is over 105°Fahrenheit (40.6°Celsius); or if a child has a seizure. It is also wise to call a doctor if a fever has lasted more than 3 days or a fever went away and then soon returned.

Adapted from “Fever” by RelayHealth, written by B.D. Schmitt, M.D.
Understanding

1. What is a fever? What usually causes a fever? ____________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

2. When should a sponge bath be used? How should a sponge bath be given? ________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

3. Name a method you have used to measure a fever. At what level would a fever be present with this
   method? ____________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

4. Besides medicine and sponge baths, what other two strategies can be used to treat a fever? ______
   __________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

5. When should a doctor be called regarding a child’s fever? (List at least three circumstances.) _____
   __________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

6. What does the word dosage mean? How can one determine a proper dosage? _________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

7. What is the body’s normal temperature? _________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________

Writing

Option A: Summarize the reading in your own words.

Option B: Write about a time when you or your child had a fever. How did you treat the fever? What
   were the results?
   __________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________________________________