

Fevers

I know it is the scariest thing in the world when its 2am, you've been sharply woken by a blood curdling scream and your child is burning up. Our instinct is to try and take away the symptoms, stop the poor child feeling so miserable and oh my, what if they start convulsing? All of these are natural and understandable reactions, mostly brought on by ignorance to the condition and general brainwashing! In actual fact, in bringing the fever down you are only aiding and abetting the enemy!

When the initial responses of the immune system are not sufficient in dealing with all the invading pathogens, or if it has been thwarted in its natural efforts to heal, your body launches another attack – turn up the heat! The most commonly known method of sterilising anything, from your baby's bottle to high tech medical equipment is with an increase in heat. You can boil bottles and teats in a pot of boiling water for ½ hour or put medical equipment in an autoclave, which intensifies the heat, thus killing off all possible bacteria and/or viruses. This is exactly what your body is doing when spiking a fever – turning up the heat to kill the bacteria and viruses. So when you know what to do, the best thing for you to do is – nothing! I can almost hear all you moms out there gasping in disbelief, this woman's crazy!

The role of a fever is to literally kill the bacteria and viruses that are causing the system distress. Bacterial and viral proteins die off at different temperatures, bacteria at below 40°C (usually 38 – 39.5) and viruses at over 40°C, usually 40-41. So when the temperature gets up to this level, don't think that your child is sicker or in more danger, their immune system is just dealing with a virus. Our own body proteins will only start to be affected at temperatures above 43°C, and the temperature will never get that high – we do not self destruct.

If you leave the fever alone, do not give anything to bring it down, then the immune system can kill all pathogens leaving your child's body free and healed. When the fever breaks on its own and the temperature starts coming down, your child will wake up better – believe me, both of my children have proven this to me time and again.

Homeopathic remedies work wonderfully in these situations in supporting the body's fever attempts and allow rapid healing through this manner. Commonly known remedies that have been known to assist in as little as a few minutes at times are Belladonna and Aconite. However, finding the remedy that is specific for that particular fever may take a little more thought. These 2 remedies will not necessarily cure all fevers; homoeopathic remedies are very specific to the nature of the symptoms. Please consult a registered practitioner for more specified care or get yourself some good over the counter remedies to keep in your medicine cabinet. The sooner homoeopathic remedies are given, the quicker the healing happens.

The presence of bacterial and viral proteins is detected by the immune system and cause the "set point" of the thermostat in our brains to rise. These substances are known as pyrogens. The body then responds with raising the overall temperature, by conserving heat and stimulating more heat production. It generally takes a few hours after the thermostat has been reset before the temperature actually rises, which means that the pathogens and pyrogens have been present and invading for hours already – even more reason to allow the fever to do its work.

Chills are often felt before the heat, because this is one of the mechanisms of heat production. When the thermostat level is set higher than normal, the relative current temperature is now colder than the setting, hence the child feels cold, relatively speaking. Blood vessels in the skin constrict, get smaller and deeper, to prevent heat loss from the skin causing a cold feeling. Shivering follows because the brain instructs the skeletal muscles to contract in order to create movement & friction

that heats the body up. The hair follicles on the skin also perk up, trapping a layer of air underneath which insulates the skin and increases the temperature – this is commonly known as “goose flesh”!

As the temperature increases to the new level set by the thermostat, these chilly symptoms abate, because the temperature now reflects the setting and the child feels neither hot nor cold – despite an elevated temperate reading.

At this point the temperature may stabilise for a few hours, alerting you to the fact that this is the optimal temperature for the destruction of the enemy. If the child is calm but just hot, leave them be, this is not dangerous and is vital in killing off the baddies!

When the immune system has won the battle and most of the pathogens have been killed off, an apparent crisis arises. The child will suddenly get very hot, feel very hot to touch and often begins sweating excessively. This is because the pyrogens have been removed to a safer level, the bacteria and viruses killed, and the thermostat has been reset to normal again. The body must now bring down the temperature of the internal environment. Blood vessels in the skin dilate; get wider and closer to the skin, causing heat to be radiated from the skin as well as the red / pink hue of a fever. Sudden sweating also follows, which is a well known way in which the body cools itself down, anyone who's been to Durban in summer knows what I mean!

This sudden change in events is called the crisis or the flush. It is at this point that one really panics and the child often wakes up crying and feels awful. This phase usually lasts a short time and is a clear sign that the temperature will soon be falling. The child then falls into a deep sleep and wakes a few hours later feeling fantastic and full of beans – just when you are collapsing from exhaustion and worry!

However, if you keep dropping the temperature with antipyrexial medicines (all the pain killer varieties), you are preventing the body from killing the bacteria or virus and allowing it a few more hours to invade the system further and create a more deep seated, complicated illness. When the drug has worn off, does the temperature not elevate again? This is because the body is now free from the restraints of the drug and is able to try and defend again; it is desperately trying to heal you, but is being disarmed, so to speak. The more you keep bringing down a fever, the more you help the baddies and disarm the body.

Convulsions, although frightening when not understood, are actually not that dangerous and are seldom the cause of any brain damage as is commonly thought. Recent research would seem to indicate that fever convulsions have no lasting negative effects on a child and only about 2% of people (children & adults included) will ever get a fever convulsion. Convulsions are caused by excessive heating of the centre of the brain that is responsible for temperature control, which leads to abnormal activity in the brain area that controls muscle contractions, this results in a fever fit.

There does seem to be a family predisposition to them, though, and once your child has had one, he or she is more prone to further attacks. Care needs to be taken however, to ensure that your child does not suffer with epilepsy. If your child convulses at a low grade temperature, below 38.5°C, then professional help must be sort.

The fit may start suddenly and can be preceded by quite a scream. If the fever stays very high for a long time, certain measures can be taken to reduce the fever somewhat, so as to prevent a convulsion yet still maintain its fighting capacity. However, if a fit ensues, your child will get rigid and his arms and legs will begin jerking. His eyes may roll backwards or he may stare fixedly into space.

Sometimes frothing at the mouth also occurs. He may become bluish in the face caused by a spasm of the diaphragm which can also cause a difficulty in breathing for a short time.

It's usually all over in a minute after which your child may stay unconscious for a short while, then wake up, appearing dazed and confused and then fall off into a deep sleep for a while longer. Leave them to sleep, try not to wake them as this sleep is very necessary for the recovery of the brain and system in general. Just keep checking that they are resting peacefully, breathing easy and begin some external measures of lowering the temperature to prevent a further fit, like gently wiping down with a tepid to cool cloth, never a cold one. Contact your practitioner as soon as possible or take your child for a check up.

Some tips on how to handle a fit: as in all first aid practises, always check your ABC's, **AIRWAY, BREATHING, CIRCULATION**

- Check the clock so that you can time the length of the fit
- Turn your child onto his side to prevent his tongue falling back and possibly blocking his airway (actually swallowing the tongue is impossible)
- Wipe away any mucus, foam, food particles or anything else that may be blocking his mouth by sweeping one finger across his mouth (never use a 2-fingered pincer grasp as this can push the blockage further in)
- Loosen all tight clothing to allow free movement
- DO NOT restrain your child at all, allow his body to shake as it needs to, the muscles are very rigid and if restrained, this may result in injury
- DO NOT try to give him anything in his mouth, especially no food, drink or dummies

Babies and children often seem 'sicker' than adults, but in actual fact they are much healthier! The immune system has a cyclical reaction response which means that it launches attacks on the enemy at regular intervals. After reading this I'm sure you now realise that the immune system's attack is seen as the volatile symptoms of a fever. When the temperature spikes and a 'crises' happens, this is after a successful mission by the immune system, it will then regroup and launch again. This cycle happens only once in 24hrs in adults, but every 3-4 hours in children, thus children seem to have more severe symptoms and hence appear 'sicker'.

Homoeopathic remedies enhance the immune system's ability to fight off the invasion, supporting the body in all its healing attempts. Homoeopathic remedies do not stop the symptoms at all, will not actively bring down the fever as a paracetamol or ibuprofen based chemical medicine would, but rather support and speed up the body's healing abilities, thus bringing about rapid healing. When the body has won the battle, the fever will come down, usually within 1-3 days of homoeopathic intervention. After which health is restored and recurrences are infrequent.

Also, don't be alarmed if your child is burning up and wants a blanket, or is sweating but does not want anything to drink. Understand that they are following the exact commands of their bodies and will ask for and accept anything that they need. Our creator knew what he was doing when He designed us!

I know this is a lot to swallow, and even harder to put into practise, but I urge you to give this method of dealing with your child's fever a try, you will be amazed at the speed of recovery. To help you in the dead of night, keep doc morris™ Fevers on hand to give every hour if necessary.