



# The Children's Doctor

## All you need to know about ...

### Fever



#### What is fever?

Fever is an increase in body temperature  $>37.5$  degrees (when measured by thermometer under the arm or under the tongue). Fever is a normal body response to infection (viral or bacterial). It helps the body to fight off the infection. When children have a fever, they are usually miserable and lethargic. They may feel hot or shivery. Bringing down the fever will usually help the child to feel better but does not help the body to fight the infection or reduce the duration of the illness. Fever is usually caused by viral infections but occasionally may be caused by a bacterial infection. In the case of a bacterial infection, antibiotics may be required to overcome the infection.

#### What can I do to help my child?

Removing outer layers of clothing and using a tepid sponge on the child's forehead and trunk may help the child to feel better. Do not place the child in a bath as this can be dangerous if the child has a febrile convulsion.

Encourage your child to drink lots of fluids.

Paracetamol (Panadol) and ibuprofen (Nurofen) may be used to reduce fever when given as advised. Do not give higher or more frequent doses than recommended.

Neither paracetamol nor ibuprofen are effective at treating the cause of the fever, reducing the duration of the illness or preventing febrile convulsions. They provide symptomatic relief.

#### When should I seek help?

You should seek medical advice immediately if your child has any of the following:

- age under 6 months
- persistent high fevers
- headache
- rash
- irritability
- vomiting
- stiff neck
- drowsiness

**You should always seek medical advice if you are concerned that your child is not improving.**