



Dr. Julia Gonen, N.D.  
7 hate'ena street  
bnei atarot 60991  
p: 050.933.6004  
e: julia@gaianatuopathic.com  
[www.gaianatuopathic.com](http://www.gaianatuopathic.com)

## FEVER

Naturopathic treatment is to support a fever, unless it rises too high or too quickly. A fever of 39°C (102.2°F) to 39.4°C (103°F) is considered the optimal defense against microbes. Temperatures like these also heal the body most effectively. Remember that **fever is not a disease** but rather a symptom of an illness.

Naturopathic Doctors compare the warning system of fever symptoms to the warning system of your car's engine light. To suppress a fever is like asking your mechanic to disconnect the engine light, rather than asking him or her to identify and fix the problem that caused the light to come on in the first place. Parents should ask themselves how they can approach their children's symptoms as logically as they approach their cars: do we really want to suppress our warning signals? In the case of fever, the warning signal is much more of an aid to conquering illness, rather than as a source of damage in itself.

Please read the following information regarding how to handle your child's fever effectively, safely and as naturally as possible, how to recognize warning signs and when to get medical attention.

## FUNCTIONS OF FEVER

- 1) To stimulate the immune system.
- 2) To create an inhospitable environment for invading organisms - to turn up the heat high enough that the invading microbes cannot live.

## THE BENEFITS OF FEVER

- o **Increased antibodies** -- cells trained to specifically attack the exact type of invader that your body is presently suffering from -- produced more specific to that bug than any pharmaceutical agent
- o **More white blood cells** (the good guys) produced, circulating, mobilizing and armed to fight off the invading bugs
- o **More interferon produced** (another immune system good guy, which blocks spread of viruses to healthy cells).
- o **Walling off of iron**, on which bacteria feed
- o **Increased temperature**, which directly kills microbes. (Most bacteria and viruses actually grow better at temperatures lower than the human body, which is why they like our cool noses in the winter.)

*It's not your kids begging for fever-reducing drugs; it's the germs.*

## WHEN MEDICAL ATTENTION IS WARRANTED

- 1) Infants less than 1-month-old, with a temperature greater than 38°C (100.4°F). Seek care right away for fever in this age group. While waiting for care, breastfeed as often as the baby desires. The mother's milk has antibodies made right at the breast as it encounters pathogens in the baby's mouth.
- 2) Infants from 1-month to 3-months-old, with a temperature greater than 38°C (100.4°F), if they appear ill. Again, breastfeed on demand while waiting for care.
- 3) Children between 3 months and 36 months, with a temperature above 39°C (102.2°F), if they appear ill.
- 4) Anyone with a temperature over 41°C (105.8°F).
- 5) For children not in the above three categories, read below "How to Handle a Fever".



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*"Give me a fever, and I can cure any illness" -- Hippocrates*

## HOW TO HANDLE A FEVER

- 1) **Prevent dehydration** - encourage a feverish child to drink plenty of fluids. The increased metabolic rate that results from a fever causes the body to lose fluids rapidly. Decrease all foods or fast if possible, taking only soups and broths for nourishment.
- 2) **Medicines** - take only those that enhance fevers and sweating. Teas such as yarrow, chamomile or catnip enhance this mechanism and also help to calm the person. Other immune stimulating herbs or homeopathic medicines are excellent for this process, and may be used along with hydrotherapy techniques which enhance their action.
- 3) **Monitor the temperature frequently** - especially in a child. Rectal temperatures run 0.25°C above oral temperatures and those taken under the arm will be 0.25-0.5°C below the oral value. The new electronic digital thermometers (battery operated), are felt to be slightly inaccurate compared to the standard mercury ones. This should be kept in mind if the temperature starts to approach 40.5° C. The skin temperature measuring strips are good only as a screening test and a more accurate measure is needed to obtain a true value.
- 4) **Rest** - if your child is running a low temperature (up to 39°C, encourage him to rest in cool pajamas under a light sheet. Keep a watchful eye on him, and do not let him become chilled. A chill brings on shivering, which can increase the metabolic rate and cause the fever to escalate.
- 5) **Promote perspiration** and bring down a moderate to high temperature, give your child fever-reducing herbal tea (peppermint, chamomile)
- 6) **Sponging your child** with warm water or having him soak in a tepid bath can help reduce a fever. Give your child a soothing herbal bath. Beneficial herbs can be absorbed through the skin. You can pour several cupfuls of fever-reducing tea into tepid bath water, or, if your child is uncomfortable and restless, prepare chamomile tea and add several cupfuls of that to the bath. Allow your child to enjoy a leisurely soak. **Do not** sponge your child with cold water or rubbing alcohol or give him a cold bath. Cold and alcohol cause the blood vessels in the skin to constrict,
- 7) **Warming socks treatment** - takes time to get used to, but it's an effective way to reduce fever. Warming socks is a wonderful treatment for any condition where there is congestion and heat in the head and upper body. The thought of putting on cold, wet socks seems quite awful, but once you have them on with the dry socks you will feel relaxed and enjoy the treatment.
- 8) **Observe** - for changes in behavior, levels of consciousness or onset of convulsions and dehydration. Most parents have little problem with this as "parental intuition" plays a role. Your "feeling" should be listened to as it may prevent a fever or illness from getting out of hand. Dehydration may be assessed by pinching and feeling the skin on the face and hands for turgor (does the skin bounce back to its normal position) and dryness and observing the tongue for moisture. In newborns, retraction of the fontenells is a sign of dehydration as well. If in doubt, contact your physician.
- 9) **Restrict Iron Supplements** - infective-organisms thrive on iron. As well, do not give child meat while ill.
- 10) **Remain calm** - let your child know that you are there for them and that you care. This is felt to be one of the main therapeutic values of "chicken soup". Often times this is all it takes to ally fears and anxiety, which will aid in the healing process. Fear and anxiety have been shown in studies to depress the immune system.



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## PREVENTING FEVER

- Although it's impossible to protect your child from every illness, try to keep your child away from sick playmates. Fever-producing contagious viruses and bacterial infections travel easily from child to child.
- You know your child better than anyone else does. If your child runs a fever when overtired or overexcited, intervene and encourage a rest period to allow his body to slow down and recuperate.

## EMERGENCY TREATMENT FOR A FEBRILE SEIZURE

Occasionally, a child with a fever will have a seizure. This is called a febrile seizure, and it demands **immediate** attention.

- ✚ If your child has a febrile seizure, he needs to see a doctor immediately-not tomorrow morning. Call for emergency help.
- ✚ While waiting for emergency help, keep your child upright and make sure he is breathing well. Stay with him and talk reassuringly to him.
- ✚ Watch for changes in your child's breathing and/or color. Be sure his airway stays open.
- ✚ Clear the area around your child to prevent injury. Do not try to hold him down. Restraining a thrashing child can cause additional injury. Try placing a soft pillow or blanket under your child's head. Loosen clothing to prevent injury and ease discomfort.
- ✚ Do not try to force anything into your child's mouth. You might cause him to choke, or suffer a bite yourself.
- ✚ If vomiting occurs, turn your child's head to the side so that there is no risk of his choking on inhaled vomit. If possible, keep his whole body turned on the side as well.

## FACTS ABOUT FEVER

- Normal temperature varies amongst individuals from 35.7°C to 37.2°C.
- Children tend to run fevers higher than adults - check the normal temperature of your child when they are healthy just for reference.
- Fevers usually peak in the late afternoon.
- Fever medications can mask symptoms - your child acts as though his/her health has improved, but it really hasn't.
- Fever reducing medications may actually prolong the illness - use these medications sparingly. Ask yourself if you are giving your child this medication to decrease your own anxiety or to make your child more comfortable.
- A basic fever, one due to minor bacterial or viral illness, can be an expression of the immune system working at its best.
- Many children's fever reducing medications contain food additives such as artificial colors and flavors. Many of these additives are known to cause hyperactivity, negatively affect asthmatics or other negative side effects. Find a medication that does not contain these harmful ingredients while your child is well to keep at home for emergency use during illness.