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Fever

Here's one of the longest-running myths around:

Myth: Normal body temperature is 98.6 degrees

Truth: Normal body temperature, measured rectally, is really anything up to 100 degrees. 99 is a normal temperature. So is 97. So is 96. So is 99.9.

Temperature varies. It varies from time of day to time of day. For example, it's not unusual for a baby's temperature to be a little lower in the morning than it is in the evening. Temperature also varies a bit from person to person. Some kids might normally have a temperature of 99.5. Others are often around 97.

In addition, temperatures vary depending upon how active a person is. Obviously, a marathon runner might be expected to have a higher temperature in the middle of a race than the fan watching the race. Temperature also varies depending upon how it is taken. Rectal temperature, the "gold standard" for measurement, is usually a degree higher than when taken orally, and may sometimes be more than one degree higher than a temperature taken under the baby's arm.

So if taking a temperature is such a variable thing, why do we take temperatures? The answer is this. Sometimes a new parent may not yet KNOW whether a baby is sick at all. Maybe little Moe is a bit fussy and he's just spit up his last feeding. Or maybe he's got a runny nose and you're not sure if this is the start of a cold, or if his nose is running because he was just crying. In these instances, fever can be a *clue* that there is an infection at all.

Doctors are a little more concerned about fever with very young babies. Because newborns in the first few months of life have not always developed their defenses completely, when they DO run temperatures, they may be, on rare occasions, quite sick. For this reason, it is a good idea for you to let us know when your very young baby has any fever. Certainly in the first three months of life, any fever should be reported to your doctor.

Speaking about temperatures, a word about room temperature and bundling. Full term babies quickly learn to control their temperatures almost as well as we can. They're also not inherently cold little critters. Therefore, don't feel that they need to be kept as warm as possible. If you like to keep the temperature of the room at about 67 or 68 degrees, and you're comfortable at this temperature, your baby will probably feel the same way. Don't feel that you have to add a few extra pieces of clothing to allow for his small size or "fragility." Of course, if you're a polar bear, and you like to keep the room at 60 degrees, do that for yourself, and treat the baby to a few extra degrees in his room.

If, when you go outside, you're comfortable in a t-shirt and shorts on a nice summer day, it makes no sense to make your baby suffocate in a stretchy, sweater and jacket. Try to dress your baby in clothing that's about the same warmth as yours. ***In general, it's much better to underdress your baby than to overdress him.*** No baby is going to catch pneumonia, or even a cold, if he's a bit chilly. Lots of babies, however, do get overheated, and when they do, they can get dehydrated. Again, underdress; don't overdress.

Treating your baby's fever

As far as what to use, the most frequently used medication for fever is **acetaminophen**, which comes in brands such as Tylenol, and is given every four hours. It is available for children in infant drops, suspension teaspoons, and chewable tablets. A bit stronger, and lasting 6 hours, is **Ibuprofen** (Advil, Motrin). This comes as infant drops and suspension teaspoons. The doses for both acetaminophen and ibuprofen are in the charts below.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol) Dose Chart

CHILD'S WEIGHT & AGE		INFANTS' ACETAMINOPHEN SUSPENSION LIQUID 160 MG/5ML	CHILDREN'S ACETAMINOPHEN SUSPENSION LIQUID 160 MG/5ML	CHILDREN'S TYLENOL® CHEWABLE TABLET 160 MG/TABLET
6-11 lbs	0-3 MONTHS	 Consult your doctor	—	—
12-17 lbs	4-11 MONTHS	 Consult your doctor	—	—
18-23 lbs	12-23 MONTHS	 Consult your doctor	—	—
24-35 lbs	2-3 YEARS	 5mL (1 tsp)	 5mL (1 tsp)	 1 tablet
36-47 lbs	4-5 YEARS	—	 7.5mL (1½ tsp)	 1½ tablets
48-59 lbs	6-8 YEARS	—	 10mL (2 tsp)	 2 tablets
60-71 lbs	9-10 YEARS	—	 12.5mL (2½ tsp)	 2½ tablet
72-95 lbs	11 YEARS	—	 15mL (3 tsp)	 3 tablets

ml = milliliters tsp = teaspoonful

Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) Dose Chart

Infant Drops

INFANTS' MOTRIN® SUSPENSION DROPS 50 mg/1.25mL

Weight (lb)	Age (mos)	Dose (mL)
Under 6 mos		Ask a doctor
12-17 lbs	6-11 mos	 1.25 mL
18-23 lbs	12-23 mos	 1.875 mL

Children's Suspension

CHILDREN'S MOTRIN® SUSPENSION 100 mg/5mL

Weight (lb)	Age (yr)	Dose (mL)*
Under 24 lbs	Under 2 years	Ask a doctor
24-35 lbs	2-3 years	 5 mL
36-47 lbs	4-5 years	 7.5 mL
48-59 lbs	6-8 years	 10 mL
60-71 lbs	9-10 years	 12.5 mL
72-95 lbs	11 years	 15 mL

