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Treating Fever In Children

Clinical

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Hello, I hope you are all doing well. Back to school means back to cough and cold season too. With schools reopening and bringing back in-person learning, not only is the ongoing pandemic a concern, but also the fact that cough and cold season will soon be upon us. In this issue of Ron's Clinical Corner, I would like to review treating fever in kids.

A fever is a sign that the immune system is fighting some type of infection from a virus, bacteria, etc. While it is concerning – treatment is not always necessary – especially if it is mild and the child is doing well otherwise. While oral, ear, and forehead thermometers have gained popularity, rectal thermometers are still considered the most accurate way to measure temperature. The chart below illustrates each route of taking a temperature and the corresponding value that represents a fever:

ROUTE	TEMP (FEVER)	NOTES
Rectal	> 100.4°F	Most accurate
Oral	> 100°F	Accuracy depends on proper placement which can be an issue in younger children
Axillary	> 99°F	Less accurate than rectal or oral
Ear	> 100.4°F	If used correctly, may be more accurate than oral
Forehead	> 100.4°F	If used correctly, may be more accurate than rectal, but prone to user error

So what do you do if your child has a fever that warrants treatment? First, it is important for a child with a fever to drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated. Secondly, dress the child in lightweight clothing and have them change if they end up sweating and become chilled.

As far as treatment with antipyretics (e.g. acetaminophen, ibuprofen) goes, remember to treat your child not the number. If you do need to give an antipyretic, it is best to dose by weight instead of age in most cases. For liquid products, be sure to use the measuring device that came with the product for the most accurate dosing. Also, it is better to use only one antipyretic at a time as combining or alternating different medications has not been shown to reduce discomfort. With that being said, if the decision is made to combine or alternate, it is recommended to write down or document the time and dose of each medication, along with when the next dose is due to avoid errors.

It is also important to monitor your child to be sure they are drinking and urinating. If your child has a fever approaching 104°F, is younger than 3 months of age, or is not drinking and/or urinating you should seek medical care. In addition, if your child is acting differently or if you are concerned there may be something else going on, it is a good idea to contact their pediatrician.

Remember to always follow your school and/or local regulations if your child has symptoms of being sick.

CONSIDERING SOME OF THE SYMPTOMS OF THE COMMON COLD, ALLERGIES, ETC., CAN BE SIMILAR TO COVID-19, IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE CAUTIOUS.

Often the best course of action for anyone who is ill is to keep them home from school just in case the illness can spread.

Thanks for stopping by and see you next month at the Corner.