

## A brief but important talk on a “hot topic”: Your child’s fever

- ❖ Fever is the body’s natural way of fighting infection. It stimulates the immune system, and bacteria and viruses do not grow well in elevated temperatures.
- ❖ Fever is a sign of illness, not a disease.
- ❖ In some children, fever can be associated with a seizure or dehydration, but fever will not lead to brain damage or death.
- ❖ If fever causes discomfort to your child, you may give acetaminophen ( \_\_\_\_ mg every 4 hours, no more than 5 doses in 24 hours) or, if your child is older than 6 months, ibuprofen ( \_\_\_\_ mg every 6 hours, no more than 4 doses in 24 hours) **during waking hours** (do not wake up your child to give medication).
- ❖ Do not alternate acetaminophen and ibuprofen to treat fever.

### When to call the doctor

Fever itself will not harm your child and does not necessarily require treatment. But you should call the pediatrician if:

- ✓ Your child is under 3 months of age and has a rectal temperature of 38° C (100.4° F) or higher.
- ✓ Your child is lethargic or irritable.
- ✓ Fever has been present for longer than three days.
- ✓ Your child also has symptoms such as sore throat, ear pain, abdominal pain, or pain when urinating.
- ✓ Your child is drinking less fluid than usual and has had fewer than four wet diapers in the past 24 hours or two urinations during waking hours.
- ✓ You are worried that your child is less active than normal or is having trouble breathing, whether or not he (she) has a fever.

Adapted from Rideout ME, First LR: Fever: Measuring and managing a sizzling symptom. *Contemporary Pediatrics* 2001;18(5):42