



LAKELAND CHIROPRACTIC

▪ LIFETIME FAMILY WELLNESS ▪

Fevers in Children, a Normal Healthy Response

For years parents have worried about their children getting fevers. And for years many authorities, including most chiropractors have said that fevers were a normal response of the body to certain situations. Now several health publications such as Mothering Magazine, WebMD and Reuters Health have reported in several 2001 issues about how fevers are a normal part of a child's defense system. However, according to a study in the June 2001 issue of the journal Pediatrics, parents' fears and views about fevers have not changed significantly in 20 years.

The author of the study, Dr. Michael Crocetti of John's Hopkins Bayview Medical Center in Baltimore, Maryland, described parents' misconceptions by stating, "In some parents' minds, childhood fevers are linked to the risk of brain damage, seizures, and even death. And this fever fear may result in parents over-medicating their children. These types of fears are most likely passed down from generation to generation, and if you look back over the centuries, fever was thought to be the worst thing that could happen to you."

In the current study, Crocetti and his colleagues questioned 340 health care providers--including parents, grandparents and guardians--on their thoughts about childhood fevers and what to do about them. The researchers then compared their new findings with those from a similar study conducted 20 years ago. They found that 56% of participants in the current study were "very worried" about the potential harm of fever in their children, and 44% mistakenly believed that a temperature of 102 degrees Fahrenheit was a "high" fever.

Paula Elbert, MD, assistant professor of pediatrics at Mount Sinai Medical Center and School of Medicine, in New York says, "Fever is not a disease, it's a signal that the body is working to battle an invasion from bacteria or a virus. Far from a sign that something has gone horribly wrong, a fever can actually be an indication that the body is actively fighting illness." Dr Elbert elaborated by stating, "Fever signals the immune system to produce antibodies and, in fact, taking away a fever may even hamper the induction of the immune system to do its job. It's not necessarily a direct horror show if you take the fever down, but the fever can have a positive function." Elbert concluded "Parents have to learn about the true meaning of fever and how to respond to it," "Fever is not 99° -- it's not even 100°. It's over 100.4° in a newborn or over 101° in an older child."

The study also indicated that because of the fear of fever, parents and other caregivers are over-medicating children just because they are running a temperature. The research team found that 14% of parents gave acetaminophen and 44% gave ibuprofen at rates that were too frequent. "This practice increases the potential for toxicity from the medications," Crocetti added. He concluded, "It is going to take a real concerted effort on behalf of pediatricians and other healthcare providers to help parents understand what fever is and how to handle it."

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