



A New Attitude Toward Fevers

We have a tyranny of fear in the U.S. about fevers and infections, which is understandable, but which is a terrible obstacle to healing what ails us as individuals and as a society.

We have a mindset that says it's bad to have an illness, and that health is the absence of illness. This isn't always true. Fever is the healing flame, the great cleanser of the body, and a critical part of developing a child's immune system. An immune system that is vigorously exercised through fevers in childhood will become a much stronger and more able adult immune system than one that has been artificially suppressed since birth with vaccinations, antibiotics and fever-reducing medications. The "use it or lose it" adage applies well here.

In other words, it's very important to understand that it's our own immune system that creates our fevers, and that fevers are our main defense against our body's toxicity and the germs which feed on that toxicity. Parents are overanxious to lower a fever, and assume that when we artificially bring it down the child is healthy, which is often not the case.

Children often get fevers when they are stressed. Childhood is the time of rapid growth and dramatic change, and a child will remodel and renew his body many times as he grows. Every remodeling job requires some demolition, a breaking down of old cells and tissues that results in toxic waste and debris, which the body normally cleans up as it rebuilds new cells and tissues. This demolition, cleansing and rebuilding



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is silently going on in us all the time through our immune system, but more so in growing children. Every so often this ongoing remodeling of the immune system shifts into high gear, either because we are unknowingly taking a bigger developmental step than usual, or because we've become toxic from too much stress.

This inward shifting into high gear of our immune system has an unwelcome outer result—it makes us sick with inflammation, fever and discharge of mucus. Thus, we come down with a cold, flu, vomiting, diarrhea, strep throat, etc. In this way the immune system expels from the body mucus, pus, germs and other toxic waste and debris that have been nourishing the opportunistic germs. The crucial fact is that the symptoms of the illness are also the healing of the illness. That is because the symptoms are caused by inflammation, and inflammation is what our immune system uses in order to detoxify and heal.

When we diminish symptoms with Tylenol, ibuprofen, decongestants or antibiotics, at the same time we diminish the healing, cleansing, expulsive power of our innate immune systems. Every inflammation, in children or adults, every cold, sore throat, earache, fever and rash, is a "healing crisis." A healing crisis is an intense action of the immune system to cleanse and detoxify the body. It is a strong effort by the human spirit to remodel the body so it can be a more suitable dwelling.

It's amazing what different parental attitudes toward fevers can do for a child's healing process. Children seem to intuitively know this is something they need. Children usually don't have severe aches and pains with their fevers that adults suffer, because children's bodies are less dense and hardened than adult bodies, and offer less resistance to the fever surge of warmth flowing through them. A 5-year old boy I knew said to his worried mom during his fever, "Don't worry, Mom, I'm just growing." But that doesn't mean they should be running around outside. This is a time when children should rest and it's extremely important for them to stay warm. My general rule of thumb



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is to dress them warmly enough so that their cheeks are rosy, and their hands and feet are warm, but there is no sweat or perspiration. The body needs to be hot to burn out the illness. If the body is harboring toxicity, then a discharging fever with a runny nose, vomiting or diarrhea, for example, could be just the housecleaning that the body needs. The discharge is a sign that the fever and inflammation produced by the immune system are "digesting" toxic waste and debris and releasing them from the body, making most people healthier after they've had a fever.

- Philip Incao, MD *Pathways* #34

Dr. J. Robb Reinshagen, D.C.
Reinshagen Chiropractic & Family Wellness
513.451.4500 ~ www.reinshagenchiro.com

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