

# Fevers

There has been a lot of controversy about chiropractors allegedly "treating" fevers. Chiropractors do not treat fevers. A chiropractor detects and corrects the vertebral subluxation complex. To understand the effect of the correction of the vertebral subluxation complex on fever, **we must first understand what a fever is.**

Fever in children is defined as: rectal temperature over 100.5° F (38° C), or oral temperature over 99.5° F (37.5° C). Simply put, fever is an elevation in body temperature that is controlled by the brain and spinal cord (the central nerve system - CNS). A fever occurs when the body's innate intelligence detects an imbalance in the level of bacterial or viral organisms within the body. As a result, an effective means of dealing with this imbalance is to create an environment where it is difficult for these organisms to live.

Most fevers due to viral causes range from 101° to 104° F and last for 2-3 days. Symptoms usually occur only when the fever reaches 102° F. According to Schmitt, by itself a fever in the range 100° to 104° F is not harmful and is most commonly due to the body responding to a viral or bacterial imbalance. A small percentage of children (4%) will develop febrile convulsions due to a rapid rise in body temperature. This type of fever is generally harmless.

Many parents incorrectly think that a temperature of 104° to 105° F will cause brain damage to occur, or that if a fever is untreated it will rise higher. As a result, inappropriate treatment is frequently employed, such as: medications, herbal remedies, tepid and alcohol baths to reduce the fever. It has been determined that brain damage can occur in a fever of 107 degrees or higher. Close watch of a child's temperature and the rate at which it rises is advisable in high fevers. Parents may opt for medical evaluation/ diagnosis to determine the course of care for their child at any stage.

How does a fever work? Fever has a direct effect on the immune system. When one has a fever, the CNS increases the body's metabolism while decreasing its ability to disperse heat. A fever reduces the amount of iron in the blood stream that is needed by invading bacteria, thus starving the invader of needed nutrients. A fever also increases the activity of white blood cells that kill bacteria in your body. When the virus or bacterial imbalance has returned to normal the fever breaks and body temperature returns to normal.

In the subluxated child there can be interference in the body's fever mechanism. The subluxation complex may not allow the body to either create a fever, or not allow the temperature to return to normal once the fever has produced its desired effect. If the body has a difficult time restoring a normal temperature, then the most logical thing to do is to look and see if there is a subluxation creating interference in the nerve system. This would cause a condition, which would not allow the wisdom in the body to maintain a normal body temperature. Once the proper chiropractic adjustment is given the body usually responds in short order. This is not to say that a fever will break, as in some cases the fever will actually rise allowing the body to better fight off invading bacteria before returning to normal at a later period of time.

When a child has a fever it is important for him or her to take in plenty of fluids, as in this time of elevated body temperature, it is easy to become dehydrated. Soup broth, liquid electrolytes and fruit juices are great choices because they replace electrolytes that are used up in the fever process. Rest during times of fever to allow the body to use its energy to fight off infection. Remember to eat, but not too much. Keep an even diet when you have a fever, you don't want to stress your system by stuffing or starving yourself. Also, there should be monitoring of the subluxation in the first few hours and subsequent days as needed to ensure the subluxation is corrected, and stays corrected.

Very often the fever is a normal response and function. It is a protective mechanism that provides a very essential purpose of allowing us to adapt to our environment. It is normal to breathe in viruses and bacteria with every breath. Most of these are dealt with swiftly by our body's immune system. However, fever always needs to be regulated by your body and without that regulation the body may cause damage to itself. Since your body's nerve system is responsible for the function of your immune system, when that regulation does not happen we always want to check for the subluxation. Another way of putting it is that your immune system is a direct reflection of the integrity of your nerve system.

#### References

- Schmitt BD. Fever phobia: Misconceptions of parents about fevers. Am J Dis Child. 1980; 134(2): 176-81.
- Fallon JM. The role of subluxation in fever and febrile seizures. Today's Chiropractic Mar/Apr 1996; 25 (2): 64-66
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***Many parents fear that fevers will cause brain damage. Brain damage from a fever generally will not occur unless the fever is over 107.6F (42C). Many parents also fear that untreated fevers will keep going higher and higher, up to 107F or even more. Untreated fevers caused by infection will seldom go over 105F unless the child is overdressed, or trapped in a hot place. The brain's thermostat will stop the fever from climbing above 106F.***