FEVER: MYTHS AND FACTS

Myth: All fevers are bad for children:

Fact: Fevers turn on the body’s immune system. Fevers are one of the body’s protective mechanisms. Most fevers are good for children and help the body fight infection.

Myth: Fevers cause brain damage or fevers over 104 F are dangerous:
Fact: Fevers with infections don’t cause brain damage. Only body temperature over 108 F can cause brain damage. Fevers only go this high with environmental temperatures (e.g. confined in a closed car, heatstroke).

Myth: Anyone can have a febrile seizure:
Fact: Only 4% of children have a febrile seizure.

Myth: Febrile seizures are harmful:
Fact: Febrile seizures are scary to watch, but they usually stop within five minutes. They do not cause brain damage. Children 6 months to 6 years old are the most susceptible to febrile seizures. If your child is over age 6 and has never had a febrile seizure, it is unlikely that they will ever have one. Most children with febrile seizure will “outgrow” them by age 8.

Myth: All fevers need to be treated with fever medicine:
Fact: Fevers only need to be treated if they cause discomfort. Usually fevers don’t cause discomfort until they go over 102 F

Myth: Without treatment, fevers will keep going higher:
Fact: Fevers from infection top out at 105 F or lower, due to the brain’s thermostat.

Myth: With treatment, fevers should come down to normal:
Fact: With treatment, fevers usually come down 2 or 3 degrees.
Myth: If the fever doesn’t come down (if you can’t “break the fever”), the cause is serious:

Fact: Viruses or bacteria can cause fevers that don’t respond to fever medicine. It doesn’t relate to the seriousness of the infection

Myth: If the fever is high, the cause is serious:

Fact: If your child looks very sick, the cause is serious.

Myth: The exact number of the temperature is very important:

Fact: How the child looks is what’s important.

Myth: Temperatures between 98.7 and 100 F are low grade fevers:

Fact: Oral temperatures between 98.7 and 100 are normal temperature variations – often peaking in the afternoon and evening. (For rectal, normal elevations are from 99.5 to 100.3 F)

Adapted from http://www.hopefs.org/Behavior/FeaverPhobia.html