

What you need to know about fever in adults

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(HealthDay)—When it comes to a fever, what's true for kids isn't necessarily so for adults.

Even a slight [temperature](#) in a child warrants a call to the doctor. That's not the case, though, for most fevers in most [adults](#).

What's considered a normal temperature varies from one adult to the next. In general, though, 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit is the standard "normal" temperature, and anything higher than 100 degrees F is considered elevated—a fever.

According to the *Merck Manual*, while many people worry that fever can cause harm, a typical temporary temperature spike to 100.4 degrees to 104 degrees caused by most short-lived illnesses are well-tolerated by healthy adults.

But, in people with heart or lung disorders, a moderate fever could cause heart and breathing rates to increase. Such fevers also could affect the mental status of people with dementia.

For most adults, a moderate fever is a warning sign of illness or infection. The fever itself isn't the disease. Rather, it actually helps your body fight off the infection.

A run-of-the-mill fever might be uncomfortable, but it will generally go away within a few days. In the meantime:

- Drink extra fluids.
- Eat small portions of easy-to-digest foods.
- Get plenty of rest.
- Take an over-the-counter pain reliever to ease body aches.

But, if your fever lingers more than a few days—or gets higher—call your doctor.

Higher fevers—more than 105.8 degrees F—could damage various

organs in your body. A fever that high could be the result of severe infection, heat stroke or use of certain drugs. Those drugs include cocaine, amphetamines, anesthetics and antipsychotics.

Also alert your doctor if your fever comes with chills, sweating, a rash, loss of appetite or weakness. Other potentially serious symptoms that can accompany fever are coughing, belly pain, vomiting, diarrhea, pain when urinating, or foul-smelling urine or vaginal discharge. Talk with your doctor about these, too.

And, a [fever](#) that develops soon after you've had surgery, started a new medication or traveled internationally also warrants a call to your doctor.

More information: Harvard Medical School has more on [fever in adults](#).

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