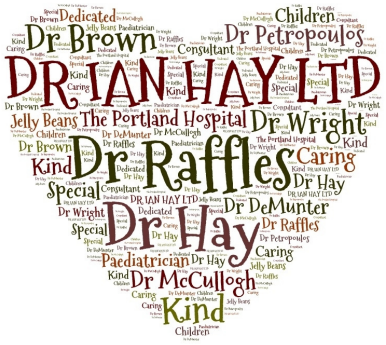

DR IAN HAY LTD
CONSULTING PAEDIATRICIANS

CONTACT US AT:

Tel: 0207 390 8295, Fax: 0870 803 0695
Email: haycybersec@aol.com
www.drianhayltd.co.uk

PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET: COUGHS, COLDS AND FEVERS

Almost every child under 3 years of age will pick up several infections in the course of a year, especially in the winter months and particularly if there is a sibling at home who attends school, a playgroup, a nursery or a child-minder. Most of these infections cause a runny nose, a sore throat and a cough.

Most of these infections are viral in origin and have a limited course of a few days. The body's response to these infections is to raise the body temperature and so there is often an associated fever present, which generally lasts for about 3 days.

Fever, itself, is not serious unless it is associated with the child being unusually lethargic, vomiting excessively or has a spotty rash which doesn't disappear with applied pressure (the glass test). In these circumstances your child would need to be seen urgently. In addition, if your child is <3 months old and has a fever >38 degrees C or if 3-6 months with a fever >39 degrees, you should have him/her seen.

Giving Paracetamol (Calpol), the American equivalent Tylenol or Ibuprofen (e.g. Brufen) is not necessary unless the fever is >39 degrees C and your child is uncomfortable with the fever.

Many parents are concerned that if they don't control the fever, their child may have a febrile convulsion (temperature fit). There is considerable evidence that lowering the temperature in a febrile child does not prevent seizures occurring and most that do occur, do so at the very onset of the infection. It seems that other circumstances need to be present, e.g. a strong family history, in order for a fit to occur.

You will need to seek help if, in addition to the fever, runny nose and cough, there is a non-blanching rash, your child is unusually lethargic, is vomiting excessively, is not taking any fluids or passing urine, is breathing very fast or the fever is remaining >39 degrees C for over 24 hours. If your child seems to have painful ears, is crying inconsolably, has continuous moaning, grunting or difficult breathing, or has a croupy cough, you should also seek help.

Otherwise keep fluid intake up, giving small amounts frequently, don't worry about your child not eating, ignore moderate fever and expect improvement in a few days, though a cough can remain for some time longer.

If, at any stage, you are concerned, do not hesitate to seek medical help.

Additional resource: NICE guideline which can be found at:www.nice.org.uk/nicemedia/live/11010/30526/30526.pdf