

FEVER

APPROACH TO A CHILD WITH FEVER LESS THAN ONE WEEK DURATION

***Sahana Devadas**

****Gayathri Devi Chinnappa**

*****Varun Govindarajan**

Abstract: *Fever, a thermo regulated elevation of body temperature above normal daily variation, is the most common reason for parents to seek medical care. The disease spectrum in Indian children is more diverse than western countries, with tropical diseases and serious bacterial infections being more common. Since most short duration fevers are self-limited, the primary goal of treatment is to keep the child comfortable, while looking for the localizing signs. Fever without localizing signs pose a unique challenge, especially in young infants who are prone to a wide spectrum of viral and serious bacterial infections. While a well appearing infant needs only parental reassurance and adequate follow-up, an ill appearing infant needs further investigations based on local epidemiology. A thorough clinical assessment and prudent selection of laboratory tests identify at-risk children, aiding in prompt management.*

Keywords: *Febrile illness, Short duration, Antipyretics, Serious bacterial infections, Tropical infections.*

Points to Remember

- *Short duration fevers are usually self-limiting and caused by common viruses.*
- *Disease profile of Indian children is different from the western population and clinical examination with relevant investigation is important.*
- *Fever maybe the only early sign of serious bacterial infections in young infants requiring hospitalization, where empirical broad-spectrum antibiotics and complete evaluation into the cause are required.*
- *Undifferentiated, benign viral fevers presenting with rash need to be differentiated early from sinister entities like meningococemia, scrub typhus, dengue fever and Kawasaki disease based on the pattern of rash appearance and distribution.*
- *Older children usually have localizing signs for infection which need to be actively searched for and treatment instituted appropriately.*
- *Undifferentiated fever in children with immunodeficiency or immunocompromised states need aggressive evaluation for source of infection and warrant early initiation of empirical antibiotics.*
- *Antibiotics in short duration fevers is justified only when a bacterial source of infection is conclusively identified.*
- *Pediatricians play an active role in counseling the parents regarding danger signs of infection, when to seek medical care, allay fears and address common misconceptions regarding fever even during wellness visits of the child to the clinic.*

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* Professor

** Associate Professor

*** Junior Resident,
Department of Pediatrics,
Vanivilas Women and Children Hospital,
Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute,
Bengaluru.
email: sahanad28@gmail.com

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