

Most people think of a "normal" body temperature as an oral temperature of 98.6 F. This is an average of normal body temperatures. Your temperature may actually be 1°F (0.6°C) or more above or below 98.6 F. Also, your normal body temperature changes by as much as 1°F (0.6°C) throughout the day, depending on how active you are and the time of day.

Signs and Symptoms



Whenever your child is ill, your observations of what's going on are very important. When you are assessing your child's illness, you're really looking at two different things—signs and symptoms. These terms have specific meanings to your doctor.

A symptom is something a patient complains about. A sign is something the doctor [or you] can see, measure, hear, taste or smell. So, if your child complains of her ear hurting, that's a symptom; if she's pulling on her ear, that's a sign.

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Signs and symptoms are indications of illness, but they are not illnesses themselves. When your doctor treats your child, he or she may treat the signs and symptoms of the illness, the illness itself, or both. For example, aspirin or acetaminophen is frequently given to a child with a fever, either may reduce the fever, but neither affects the underlying illness causing the fever. However, an antibiotic given to your child when he has an ear infection, actually helps the body to fight off the infection and, so, is treating the illness. The earache [a symptom] and the fever [a sign] will go away because the infection [the illness] is being treated.

Most of the medicines you can buy in the drugstore without a prescription treat symptoms but doesn't treat the illness itself. So the "cold" medicine you may buy for your child doesn't make the cold go away any more quickly, but they may make your child feel a little



A fever can last for several days. When your child's body comes into contact with such a bacteria or virus, your child's body temperature heats up to try and destroy the invading infection.

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better.

There's an ongoing debate about treating signs and symptoms of common illnesses.

Some doctors believe that unless the signs and symptoms are severe, you're better off not treating them. Some of the symptoms of an illness may actually be beneficial and speed recovery. Every medicine has side effects, and sometimes these can be worse than the illness itself.

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