

Managing Fevers

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Fever is the immune system's first response to infection with a virus, like influenza or mono, or bacteria, like *Streptococcus*. Even though it can be uncomfortable, at the beginning of an infection we want to encourage a strong fever. Elevated temperatures make it harder for many viruses and bacteria to reproduce. Encouraging fever also encourages immune cell proliferation, function and mobility, as well as interferon production, which is responsible for the familiar aches and pains, but also assists in rapid resolution of infection.

Many practitioners believe that children who aren't allowed to mount strong fevers may be less able to do so as adults and so are more prone to extended illnesses. If this is the case, in addition to supporting a good fever in adults, it may be a good idea to wisely manage fevers in children instead of always suppressing them.

Of course, it's important to remember that fever of 100.4F in an infant under 8 weeks or any child's or adult's fever over 104°F should be managed in consultation with a physician. Temperatures left unchecked at this level for extended periods can cause convulsions and delirium. Any fever accompanied by unusual symptoms should also be brought to the attention of a physician.

Fever Builders:

Some people have a hard time mounting a strong fever, so a slightly elevated temperature lingers along with other uncomfortable symptoms, such as aches and chills. These fever stimulants are all tasty combined as tea with honey and will also encourage free-flowing mucus.

Ginger (*Zingiber officinalis*): stimulates fever via increased circulation; promotes sweating (fresh root is especially potent here)

Cayenne (*Capsicum annuum*): antibacterial; enhances fever by increasing circulation; also moves energy/heat to the surface of the body, promoting sweating; contains high levels of vitamin C; thins mucus in lungs and eases expectoration

Cinnamon (*Cinnamomum cassia*): gentler in taste than the above, so may be a good choice for younger kids; nice combined with fresh ginger in tea for chills

Fever Breakers:

If fever goes on too long, we may want to bring it down slightly to increase comfort (or perhaps safety) without suppressing the fever altogether. Even a cool bath can make a big difference in core temperature. Fever reducing herbs are often bitter and cool the body and promote sweating; they can also reduce aches and chills when these alternate with feeling hot. The following herbs make a great tea, even for kids (with honey).

Catnip (*Nepeta cataria*): promotes perspiration, bringing down fever; decongestant; add as ½ part of tea

Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*): great promoter of sweating and circulation; add as ½ part of tea

Elder Flower (*Sambucus nigra*, *S. canadensis*): promotes sweating, moves mucus; helps eliminate toxins related to infection; 1 part in tea formula

Peppermint (*Mentha piperita*): cooling, adds flavor; 1 part of tea formula

To make tea: Add 1-2 teaspoons to boiled water; steep covered for 15 minutes. Infants can be bathed in a cooled bath of this tea.

Tips to Speed Fever Along:

Wrap up: By stopping activity and wrapping ourselves in lots of blankets, especially when we feel cold, we can more quickly achieve the higher temperature that our body is trying to reach. Once this happens, we start to sweat and actually feel hot, instead of chilly. Stay wrapped up as long as possible to maintain higher temperatures.

Starve the fever: Generally we don't want to eat much during fever, and this is part of a healthy response. Bacteria in particular need glucose (sugar), so not eating supports the body's efforts to heal.

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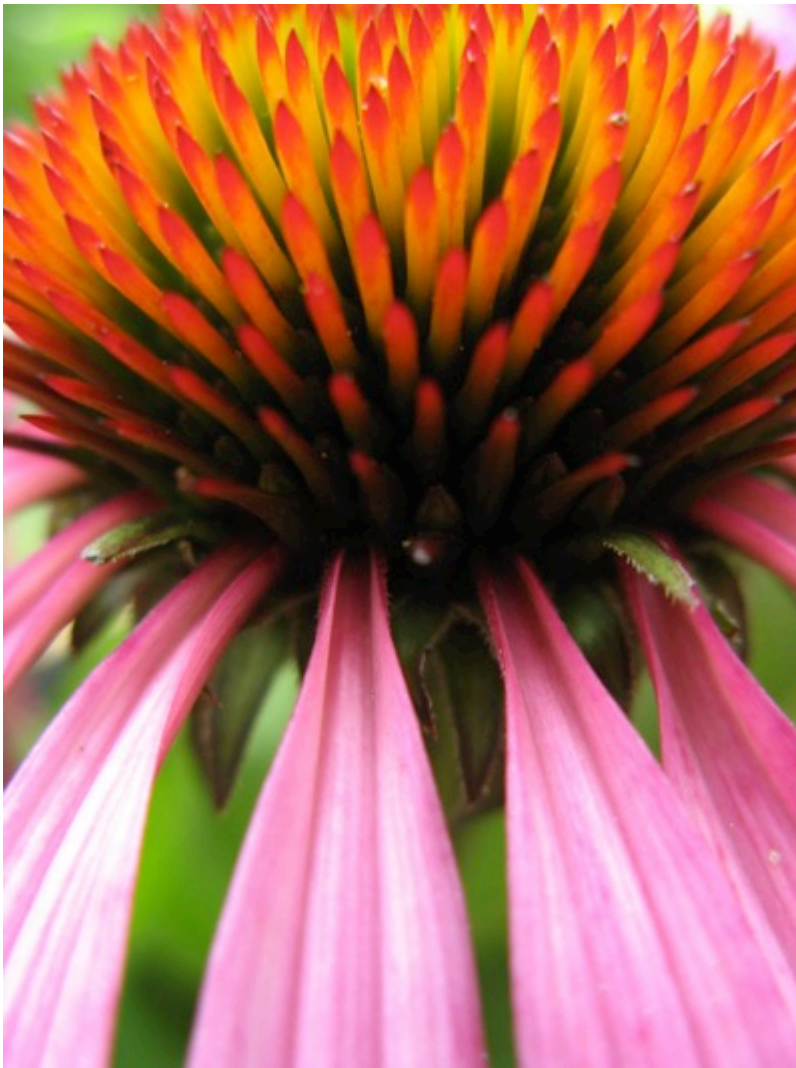


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