Treating and Reducing a Fever

The best way to treat and reduce a fever is to give the sick adult or child extra liquids, remove extra clothing and give fever-reducing medicines.

Drink Lots of Liquids

Encourage the sick person to drink extra liquids. Popsicles, iced drinks and ice cubes are also helpful. Body fluids are lost during fevers because of sweating. By drinking extra liquids you can replace the lost body fluids.

Remove Extra Clothing

Do not bundle up a person with a fever because it may cause them to have a higher fever. Clothing should be kept to a minimum to allow heat to be lost through the skin. If the sick adult or child feels cold or is shivering (the chills), provide a blanket to make them comfortable.

Use Fever-Reducing Medicines

Medicines such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen work well for reducing fever. It is better to use these medicines only if the sick person feels bad or if the fever is very high and preventing the sick person from taking liquids.

- Do not give aspirin to any child under 21 years of age. It can cause Reye syndrome, which is a very serious illness affecting the liver and the brain.
- Children and infants can be given an over-the-counter fever medicine containing either acetaminophen or ibuprofen. These medicines are available in both liquid and chewable forms. Follow the dosage guidelines listed on the bottle.
- For liquid medicines, use the measuring cap that comes with the bottle to be sure that you are giving the right dose. Do not use the measuring cap with other products. It is important to follow the bottle instructions and not give these medicines more often than the instructions recommend.
- o If you are already using a fever-reducing medication, be sure that you are not combining it with other medicines such as over-the-counter cold and flu medicines that also contain acetaminophen or ibuprofen in the active ingredients. Giving fever-reducing medicines twice can cause poisoning. You can alternate acetaminophen and Ibuprofen every 2-4 hours to lower a fever for comfort.
- Two hours after a sick adult or child has been given these drugs, the fever is usually reduced 2° to 3°F (1° to 1.5° C).
- You will need to continue giving the medicine while the child still has a fever.
 Stop giving fever medicines once the fever is over.

Sponge Bath

A sponge bath in lukewarm water can help a sick person feel better, but it is does not help reduce fever. It is important to first give the sick adult or child a fever-reducing medicine and wait at least 30 minutes to give the medicine a chance to start working before bathing.

To give a sponge bath, fill a bathtub or basin with about two inches of lukewarm water – between 85° to 90°F (29° to 32°C) - and wet the sick person's skin with a sponge or washcloth. Do not add ice, ice water or rubbing alcohol to the water because these things do not help reduce fevers and can make the person ill.