

# How to Treat Childhood Diseases

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*"The best doctors are Dr. Diet, Dr. Quiet and Dr. Merryman." —Jonathan Swift*

All of the common illnesses of childhood are inflammations. "Infection" is the wrong word for them because it suggests that we get sick because germs invade us. This is misleading. We are always exposed to, and often harbor, germs and yet we only occasionally get sick.

## **Why do we get sick when we do?**

In order to be healthy we must keep an inner balance in body and soul while all the time growing and changing from birth to death. Childhood is the time of most rapid growth and dramatic change, and a child will remodel and renew the body many times while growing. Every remodeling job requires some demolition, a breaking down of part of the inherited bodily structure in order to rebuild it better. This breaking down of old cells and tissues results in debris, which must be cleaned up before the body rebuilds itself. *It is the immune system* which does the breaking down by causing cell death and, when necessary, fever and inflammation to destroy and digest foreign or outworn bodily material. *And it is the immune system* which cleans up the digested material and debris by pushing it out of the body. That is why children so often will have skin rashes and discharges of mucus or pus, *because their immune systems are actively working*. Debris that remains in the body may act like a poison or may cause allergies or repeated inflammations later on. Germs do not "attack" us, but they often multiply wherever the body's living substance is dying, breaking down, and being discharged, Germs don't cause illnesses; they feed on them.

Every childhood inflammation, every cold, sore throat, ear ache, fever and rash is a healing crisis and a cleansing process, a strong effort by the human spirit to remodel the body so it can be a more suitable dwelling. Anthroposophic and homeopathic remedies help and promote this cleansing process and help the illness to work its way out of the body in order for healing to occur. Antibiotics, aspirin, ibuprofen and other anti-inflammatory drugs cool down and suppress the "fire" of the immune system so that the symptoms subside *before* the illness has fully worked its way out of the body. When an inflammation is suppressed in this way, and prevented from fully discharging its toxins, then either the inflammation will come back, or else the tendency to allergies and asthma will be increased. Recent research has confirmed that antibiotics and vaccinations are a cause of increased allergies and asthma.

It rarely happens in healthy people that the inflammatory response of the immune system gets out of control. In such cases an antibiotic is indicated. Although an antibiotic may be lifesaving, it never heals an inflammation; it only suppresses it. The causes of the inflammation must still be healed after the antibiotic treatment, otherwise the immune system may remain weakened.

## **Cleansing and Detox**

In addition to any remedies you may use, *the first and best thing you should always do* at the onset of any inflammation, fever, cold or "infection" is to cleanse the body as follows:

1) Give infants a glycerin rectal suppository. For adults and children over one year of age, give a Bisacodyl (Dulcolax) suppository. If you prefer, an enema may be used instead of a suppository. (Of course, do not use any of these if diarrhea is present.) After the initial suppository or enema, it is important to keep the cleansing going until the illness is all better by giving a dose of Milk of Magnesia once daily for 3-5 days.

Infants under one year: Fennel tea and diluted juices from stewed organic apricots and prunes will help to loosen stools. Milk of Magnesia dosage:

Children 1-5 years of age: 1-2 tablespoons or 2-4 tablets. Children 6-12 years of age: 2-3 tablespoons or 4-6 tablets. Over 12 and adults: 4 tablespoons or 6-8 tablets (After the first 3-5 days and until fever and pain are all gone, stewed prunes will help to keep bowels loose.)

2) Drink lots of warm herb teas, especially horsetail (equisetum) for adults. It cleanses the kidneys.

### **Body Warmth and Fever**

Children should always be warmly dressed for the weather. This will increase the body's ability to handle inflammations. The normal body temperature in a healthy child or adult should be 98.6 or slightly higher; preferably not lower. A subnormal temperature indicates that not enough warmth is being produced by the body. Viruses and bacteria in us grow faster, and toxins accumulate when the body temperature is lower, and they are all cleared faster from the body by the immune system when the body temperature is higher. Weather permitting, young children should be dressed in natural fibers with three layers on top and two on bottom. Wool socks are very helpful to support a healthy body temperature. Children under three years especially should wear caps or hats to protect the body from warmth loss and the intensity of the sun.

Fever should not be regarded as a dangerous or unhealthy process in the body. It is actually the body's messenger and a healthy response to the presence of something foreign or toxic that the body needs to get rid of. If we feel very uncomfortable, aching or even delirious with a fever these are symptoms caused by the toxicity, the poisons, in our system. The fever isn't the problem, it's part of the solution! Giving fever suppressant medication for a fever is like killing the messenger.

Fever convulsions are caused, *in susceptible children*, by a very rapid rise in temperature early in an illness, often before one is even aware of the fever. They occur from six months to six years of age and they do not cause permanent damage. A fever convulsion is less likely to occur if these recommendations for bowel cleansing, diet, quiet and warmth are followed.

Toxicity from certain *diseases* and certain immunizations may rarely cause brain damages or convulsions in children or adults, regardless of whether the fever is high or low. But *fever itself*, even when 104 degrees F or over, will not cause brain damage. (Some cancer patients are heated to a body temperature of 107 degrees F for 2 hours with no brain damage whatsoever.)

Therefore, when a child has a fever, dress him even *more warmly* than usual with several layers of cotton or wool. Keep the patient warm enough that the cheeks are red and the hands and feet are warm, but there is no sweat or perspiration. The body in its wisdom wants and needs to be hot in order to burn out the illness. When the fever is rising, we feel chilled and want to get warm under blankets. When the

fever breaks and then starts to come down, only then do we feel hot and sweat and throw off the blankets. This is the natural way the immune system burns out the illness and discharges its toxins.

It is best *not* to give aspirin, ibuprofen or baths for a fever. There is no evidence whatsoever that these prevent fever convulsions. In fact, they *prolong* the illness because they make the immune system work harder to maintain the body hot enough to cook out the illness and digest the bacteria, viruses and toxins. Healing occurs when these have been fully digested and discharged from the body. Traditional medical wisdom has always recognized that the discharge of pus, mucus or rash is a *healing response* to the underlying illness.

If a child or adult with a high fever is very uncomfortable and restless, this is a sign of toxicity and the previously mentioned cleansing measures are needed. You may also rub the arms and legs and head with a washcloth moistened with tepid water and Arnica tincture or lemon juice. (From the neck to the knees the child should not be undressed.) Rub vigorously to make the skin red and this will help to dissipate excess body heat through the skin. *This restlessness and irritability during a fever is caused by circulating toxins in the body and can often be prevented by following the directions under "Cleansing and Detox."*

### **Dr. Diet**

When someone has, or is coming down with any type of inflammation, cold or fever, the diet should be restricted. When your body is trying to "digest" and eliminate toxic substances it will help if you don't have to digest much food at the same time. Therefore, the general rule is to avoid protein foods during the acute illness. These are: meat, eggs, dairy, nuts, juices, fish and legumes (beans, peas, lentils, soy, etc.). The sick person should have a mainly liquid diet of vegetable broth, herb teas and fruit juices, but no juices colder than room temperature.

Fruit, cooked vegetables, grains and light crackers are also suitable. Another general rule is that when sick, eating less is better than eating more. If the patient is not hungry, then she is better off not eating. The return of appetite is a sign of getting over the illness, but those first meals after the fever is gone should be light ones. Don't be too eager to have your child regain the lost weight; this will happen naturally soon enough as your child's appetite and strength return. After the illness, reintroduce the restricted foods gradually and carefully.

### **Dr. Quiet**

Most adults have experienced how, during a fever or any inflammatory illness, we crave peace and quiet and are disturbed by noises and sounds which usually don't bother us when we are well. Children have this need for peace and quiet during their illnesses, though they will rarely express it. Instead, out of "boredom" they will ask to listen to the radio, tapes or watch TV. These stimulations are best avoided, especially for younger children and should be replaced by just "being there" for your child in a peaceful, unhurried, reassuring way. Keep them, quietly under covers in bed or on a couch away from the hustle and bustle of household activity. *The more they sleep, the better.*

Illness is a time to remove oneself from the usual pressures and routines of life and to "veg out" totally and to allow one's body to repair and renew itself in the context of a peaceful and supportive environment. Very often illness can provide a wonderful opportunity for renewed communication and bonding between parent and child.

### **Dr. Merryman: Mastering Fear**

The cleansing and detox and other recommendations in these pages have proven themselves to work extremely well in over 80 years of experience with anthroposophical medicine in many countries of the world. They have worked extremely well for my patients, including my own three children, since I began practicing medicine in 1972.

There have been articles in pediatric medical journals about "fever phobia," the unreasoning and unwarranted fear of fever that many parents have. Fear is a natural response to the experience of powerful forces which we do not understand. Acute inflammation and fever are certainly poorly-understood powerful forces, nonetheless they are healing forces.

When fear gains the upper hand, clear vision and judgment go out the window. If we can master our fear and sit calmly and reassuringly with our children when they are ill, observing them carefully, there is much we can learn. We may find that our fear gives way to a healthy respect and a glimmer of understanding for the change emerging in our child through the ebb and flow of its fever.

In every fever and inflammation, forces of body, soul and spirit are working to bring to birth a new order and a new balance. Many mothers have told me of their child's developmental leap in emotional and neurological maturity after working through a feverish illness. Like any birthing process, we need to be alert and discerning to see that the inflammation unfolds in a healthy way, and to know when to call for expert help. This knowledge and discernment can be learned through experience, and the experience is well worth it.

Often children themselves have an intuitive understanding of what they are experiencing as they work through a feverish inflammatory illness, and occasionally they express it. One five-year old patient of mine said to his concerned mother at the peak of his illness, "Don't worry Mom, I'm just growing!"