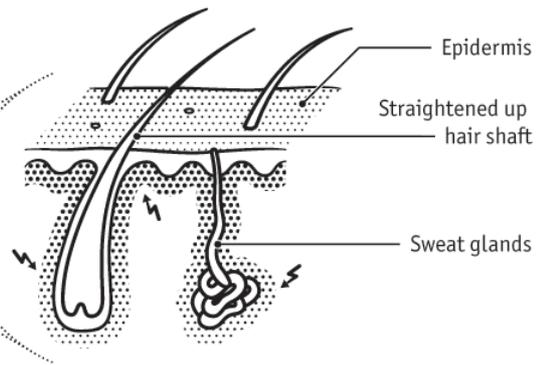


If the immune system comes in contact with the pathogenic agents, then messengers are released, which lead to the increase of nominal value of the temperatures in the hypothalamus. Here the heat generation of the body is increased and heat dissipation by the skin is decreased by straightening of the hair and narrowing of the sweat pores.

Reduction of heat dissipation by the skin



Fever - What causes it?

The internal human body temperature normally lies between 36 °C and 37 °C. If the body temperature increases above 38 °C then we call it fever. A value between 37 °C and 38 °C is described as increased or subfebrile body temperature. If the thermometer shows more than 41 °C, then it is called hyper pyrexia (extremely high fever). These values are applicable for anal measurement. Fever is not an independent illness but it is a symptom that can appear in an entire series of clinical patterns. The most frequent cause of fever is infections such as the common cold.

How does fever develop in common colds?

The regulation centre for body temperature is located in the hypothalamus, a part of the brain. Fever develops if the standard value of around 37 °C is increased. The same can happen in case of infections. If the immune system comes in contact with the pathogenic agents, then messengers are released. These pyrogens cause an increase in the nominal value - and thus an increase in body temperature, which depends upon the severity of infection and the pathogenic agents. Contact with common cold viruses does not increase the body temperature in adults or increases it only slightly. Influenza viruses and bacteria often cause high fever. An increased body temperature helps the immune system to fight pathogenic agents because immune cells can be further activated by it.

What are the symptoms of fever?

In order to match the actual value of the body temperature to the increased nominal value, heat generation is increased via stimulation of the metabolism and by reinforced muscular activity (muscle tremor) and heat dissipation over the skin is curbed. Hence, hands and feet are often cold when the body temperature increases, cheeks become pale and a person feels cold and may even shiver. Glazed eyes, dry, hot skin, fast pulse and accelerated breathing indicates fever. Fever is often accompanied by discomfort and a general feeling of being unwell - with symptoms of tiredness, fatigue, loss of appetite and headache.

How is fever treated in common colds?

It is advisable to take antipyretic medication if you have high fever and a pronounced feeling of illness. It is not necessary to immediately treat increased body temperature with medicines in case of respiratory tract infections such as common cold. Eventually it is a normal reaction that helps the organism to become healthy again. In any case it is recommended to avoid physical exertion, take rest and drink more fluids as the body loses more fluids in case of fever. Moreover the use of wet compresses is an established and safe method to reduce the body temperature. The method of the assessment of fever depends upon the cause of fever and its course. In case of uncomplicated respiratory tract infections, the body temperature usually normalizes within a few days. Persistent fever, temperatures above 39.5°C and repeated increase in fever can indicate a warning for complications. Therefore it is necessary to consult a physician as to what is the expected course of fever and what are the signs that will make a visit to the doctor necessary again.