ALTERTANTING ACETAMINOPHEN AND IBUPROFEN

Our program discouages treating all fevers this way for the following reasons:
* The American Academy of Pediatrics has never recommended alternating antipyretics (see Mayoral reference)
* Alternating antipyretics can cause confusion and dosage errors. Also poisoning can occur if the parent converts to giving just 1 drug but at the more frequent intervals.
* Since it is an attempt to 'control fever', the practice increases the parent's level of fever phobia and sense of vulnerability.
* Since the recommendation is driven by fever phobia, we need to counteract it by reassuring parents that fever is beneficial for fighting infections.
* However, a recent study on alternating acetaminophen and ibuprofen q 4 hours for fever found significant benefits over monotherapy. (Sarrell 2006) They report a mean daily temperature approximately 1 C (1.8 F) lower with the alternating regimen.
* This guideline continues to be opposed to using this regimen routinely in telephone care. The risk for dosage errors and poisoning due to caller confusion remains real on the telephone. Telephone medicine is not practiced at research pace. This study had many safeguards: all patients were seen, written instructions on how to dose the 2 antipyretics (including the initial loading dose) were provided, and a pharmacist reinforced these instructions.
* Let's continue our efforts to teach parents that fever is beneficial and generally not harmful.

INDICATIONS FOR ALTERNATING ANTIPYRETICS
* Caller states they were instructed by their PCP to alternate both products and is calling to check the dosages or dosing intervals. Require fever to be > 104 F (40 C).
* The fever is > 104 F (40 C) AND unresponsive to 1 medicine alone AND caller can't be reassured about fever. (Reason: prevent ED visit)

How to implement alternating antipyretics:
* Check the dosage of each medicine and have the caller write them down and read them back.
* Recommend giving one fever medicine q 4 hours (acetaminophen q 8 hours and ibuprofen q 8 hours) (Avoid q 3 hour intervals)
* Duration: use alternating meds for 24 hours in most cases (EXCEPTION: prolonged high fevers as with some influenza viruses)