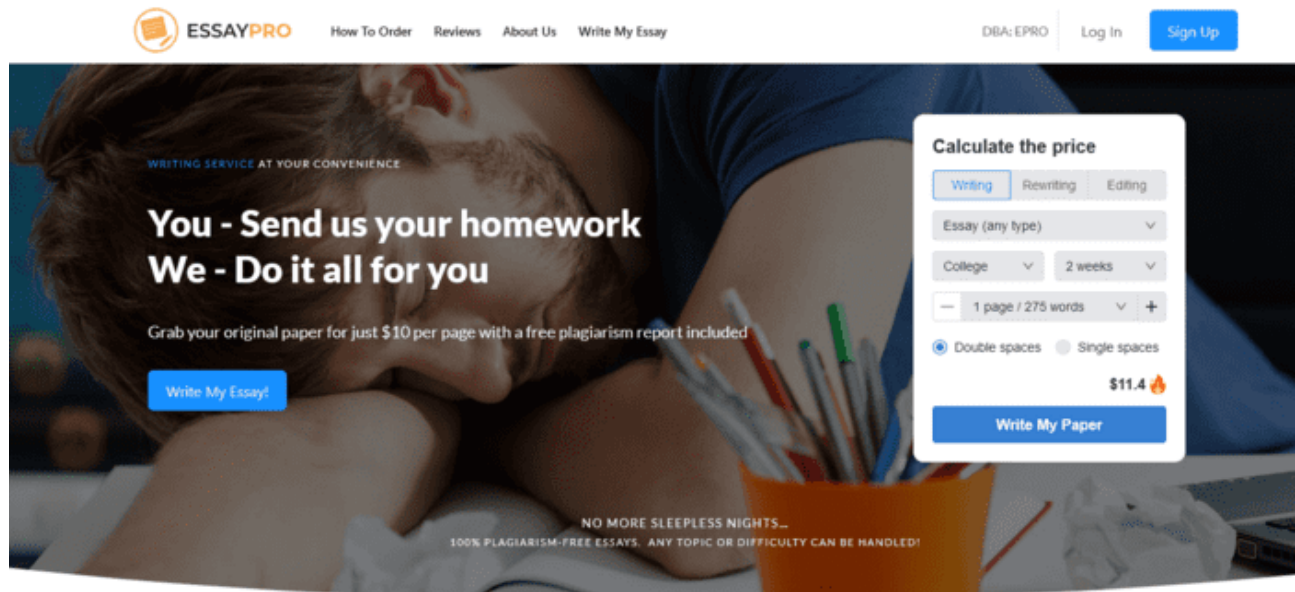


Fever: Our Body's Hottest Defense Mechanism



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The human body is a complex and sophisticated machine in which all components must maintain an intricate balance to ensure optimal functioning. This balance at a specific set point is known as homeostasis. There are many homeostatic variables and the one I find most interesting is temperature, more specifically how our bodies respond to environmental and internal threats by means of thermoregulation. Many different syndromes such as heat stroke, neuroleptic malignant syndrome, malignant hyperthermia and [fever](#) can lead to elevation of body temperature. Fever is usually triggered by infection or [inflammation](#) while the other syndromes are a result of an imbalance between heat production and heat loss rather than a change in the body temperature set point (Prewitt, 2005). This paper aims to describe the different elements that originate a fever in the human body.

As mentioned above, fever is a defense mechanism the immune system uses to get rid of invading pathogens. The infectious organisms or their products that cause fever are called pyrogens and they can be exogenous (from the outside) and endogenous (internally produced). They are low-molecular-weight proteins that modulate immune, inflammatory and hematopoietic processes in the body (Biddle, 2006). Pyrogenicity is a fundamental biologic property of several cytokines and hence the property of fever links host

perturbations during disease with fundamental perturbations in cell biology (Dinarello, 1999). When a microbial infection occurs, it usually causes localized tissue death or injury stimulating the release of inflammatory mediators that attract white blood cells which phagocytize the pathogen and initiate the release of cytokines and prostaglandins: small proteins that faci...

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