

Febrile Convulsions

Family Information



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A febrile convulsion is a fit (convulsion or seizure) associated with a high temperature (also known as fever, pyrexia, febrile). The fit usually occurs during the rise in temperature.

During a fit, the child will usually become unconscious and stiff, with jerking movements of the arms and legs. They may become a little 'blue' around the mouth, and saliva may froth out. Their eyes may roll upwards.

Most febrile fits last from a few seconds to a few minutes, though at the time this may seem like longer. Occasionally they can last for a much longer length of time. Your child may be sleepy and confused after the fit - this is a normal response, and will pass.

Are febrile convulsions common?

- They occur in about 1 in 20 children, most commonly between 6 months - 3 years of age.
- They often occur on the first day of an illness associated with fever. There appears to be no connection between how high a child's fever is and whether they have a seizure - they can occur even with mild fevers.
- Most children will not have another seizure during the same illness.

Is my child epileptic?

No. Febrile convulsions are not the same as epilepsy. Epileptic fits, though sometimes similar in appearance, are not associated with a high temperature and tend to re-occur in later childhood. The risk of your child developing epilepsy following a febrile fit is very small, as is the likelihood of brain damage occurring.

Will it happen again?

Possibly. In most cases only one convulsion occurs. However, one in three children who have had a febrile convulsion will have more than one.

A future febrile convulsion is more likely if there is a family history of febrile convulsions in close relatives or if the child is younger than 15 months. After the age of three years the risk of having another one becomes rapidly reduced.

What should I do if my child is unwell?

- Check your child's temperature regularly.
- Keep your child cool by cooling the room and removing layers of clothing or bedclothes.
- If your child is distressed or unwell medication such as paracetamol and ibuprofen given as per the instructions on the packaging can help lower the fever and make your child more comfortable.
- Consult your GP if you are worried.

What should I do if my child has another febrile convulsion?

First aid you should give for a febrile seizure:

- Stay calm and note the time the seizure starts.
- Move any hard or sharp objects away from the child.
- Do not move your child during the seizure or put anything in their mouth (unless to move from out of harm).
- Wait for the seizure to finish (if not stopped in five minutes call 999).
- Place the child in the recovery position shown here once seizure has stopped.
- Make them as comfortable as possible. Contact a health professional.

If you have any questions or concerns - please ask the doctors or nurses before you are discharged - or telephone your own family doctor.

If your child:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Has another seizure or does not improve.• The seizure lasts more than five minutes (this includes small twitching movements even if the large jerking movements have stopped).• Has difficulty breathing.• Was not fully conscious before the seizure or for one hour afterwards.	<p><i>You need urgent help PHONE 999</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If this is your child's first febrile seizure.• If the seizure stops within five minutes but your child is still unwell and/or the cause of the fever is unknown.	<p><i>See your GP or health professional within the same day</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If this is not your child's first febrile seizure, the seizure lasts less than five minutes and the cause of the fever is known.	<p><i>Contact NHS Direct phone 111, or a health professional if you need further advice.</i></p>