

Febrile Convulsions in Children

Child Health Information

What is a febrile convulsion?

Febrile convulsions are a type of fit (seizure) which occur when a child has a fever (High temperature). They usually happen between six months and five years of age.

They are fairly common. About 1 in 30 children below the age of 5 experiences a febrile convulsion. This is more likely if there is a family history of febrile convulsions.



What does a convulsion look like?

Your child's body becomes stiff, they lose consciousness and their arms and legs jerk. Their eyes may roll back. This can be very frightening to watch.

The fit usually lasts a few minutes. Afterwards they will appear sleepy but will make a full recovery within a few hours.

Will it happen again?

1 in 3 children will have another febrile convulsion in the future with another feverish illness.

How can I prevent it?

There is no good evidence you can prevent a convulsion when your child has a fever. Medicines such as paracetamol and ibuprofen will make your child more comfortable during the fever but will **not** prevent a febrile convulsion. Often the fit is the first sign that there is a fever.

What to do if they have fever again

- Keep a close eye on your child when they have an infection; seek advice from GP if you are worried.
- If your child has a temperature and is distressed, you can give them paracetamol (eg Calpol[®]) and/or ibuprofen (eg Nurofen[®]). Make sure you read the instructions carefully.
- Remove or loosen clothing to help them cool down.
- Offer fluids often to make sure they are well hydrated.

Will my child develop epilepsy?

Having a febrile convulsion does not cause epilepsy. Less than 2 children out of every 100 will go on to develop epilepsy. This number is not very different from children who have never had a febrile convulsion.

Do febrile convulsions cause permanent brain damage?

Febrile convulsions almost never cause any damage. Very rarely a child who has had a prolonged febrile convulsion lasting more than 30 minutes may suffer long-term complications.

What to do if your child has another convulsion

Do:

- Note the time – how long did it last?
- Move objects that may cause injury
- Put something soft under the child's head
- Turn them onto their side as soon as possible
- Stay with the child
- Try not to panic

Do Not:

- Move the child unless in danger
- Restrict the child's movements
- Place anything in their mouth
- Give anything to eat or drink until fully recovered

If you are very worried or the fit does not seem to be settling after 5 minutes call 999 for an ambulance

Further Information

Your GP, hospital doctor, or health visitor will be happy to give further advice.

NHS choices website: <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/febrile-convulsions>