

Febrile Convulsions

Information for parents and/or caregivers

Welcome to the Southern Adelaide Local Health Network. This information sheet aims to answer any questions you may have about your child and febrile convulsions.

What is a febrile convulsion?

A febrile convulsion is a convulsion or fit that occurs when a child has an infection. Febrile convulsions occur in approximately 3% of children aged between 6 months and six years.

The convulsion is almost always very brief (less than 2 minutes) and does not cause your child any harm.

It is important to seek medical help if your child has a febrile convulsion so that the cause of the fever can be found, and appropriate medical advice and treatment can be given.

Why do febrile convulsions occur?

It is possible for anyone to have a convulsion, given the right stimulation. The brains of some infants and young children are very sensitive to rises in body temperature making them more prone to having a convulsion when they have a fever.

The convulsion usually occurs as the temperature increases rapidly and most often occurs on the first day of illness. It may be the first sign that your child is unwell. Some families are more susceptible to febrile convulsions than others.

What do febrile convulsions look like?

When a child has a convulsion or fit, they become unconscious, unaware of their surroundings, their eyes may roll back, and any part of their body may jerk or twitch. They may have difficulty breathing or look blue.

It is frightening to witness your child having a convulsion but remember that it is very rare for a convulsion to cause any harm. Once the convulsion stops your child is likely to be sleepy or irritated for some time afterwards.

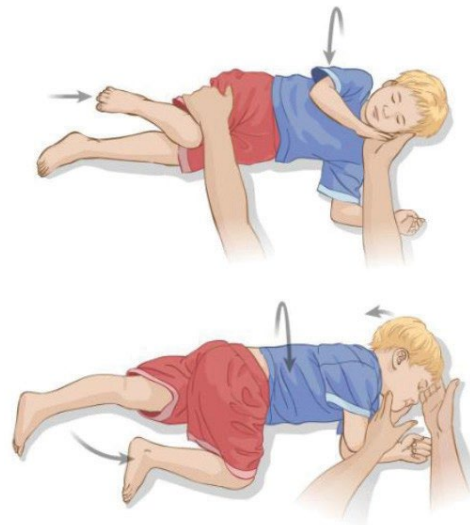
What do I do if my child has a febrile convulsion?

Remember that most seizures will stop within seconds or a couple of minutes without any medical treatment.

The most important thing is – try to stay calm.

If possible, note the time the seizure starts and finishes.

Lay your child on their side with their head in a neutral position. Do not lay a person who is unconscious or having a fit, on their back.



Do not put anything inside their mouth. They will not swallow their tongue.

Stay with your child during the convulsion.

There is NO NEED to attempt to cool your child by removing excessive clothing or putting a fan on.

Seek medical help as soon as possible, e.g. your local doctor or nearest hospital.

If the convulsion does not stop within five minutes call an ambulance 000.

What should I do when the convulsion stops?

Your child may not wake up straight away so it is important to keep him/her lying on their side until fully conscious.

Call an ambulance 000 if your child does not wake within 30 minutes of the convulsion.

It is recommended that your child sees a doctor to find out the cause of the fever that has caused the febrile convulsion.

If your child looks unwell after the convulsion, please seek medical help immediately.

Will my child get epilepsy?

Febrile convulsions do not significantly increase the risk of developing epilepsy later in life.

Febrile convulsions are fits or seizures that occur only with a fever or infection. Children with epilepsy have repeated seizures without fever or infection.

Follow up

Most children who have brief febrile convulsions are healthy, with no long term problems and stop having them by the time they are 6 years old.

For those children who have very long convulsions or have them frequently, a review by a paediatrician (a specialist children's doctor) is recommended.

How do I prevent my child having a febrile convulsion?

There is no guaranteed way of preventing febrile convulsions. Reducing fever in children does not prevent febrile convulsions.

Do not place your child in a bath to bring their temperature down.

If your child has a prolonged or very frequent febrile convulsions, your doctor may prescribe a medicine to attempt to reduce the frequency or to treat them when they occur. The side effects of the medication need to be weighed against the very low risks of febrile convulsions.

Remember – febrile convulsions:

- Are common
- May recur in some children
- Cause no long term problems
- Do not result in brain damage, death or epilepsy
- Stop by six years of age
- Regular paracetamol or ibuprofen will not prevent a febrile convulsion

For more information

- See your family doctor
- For 24 hour health advice call - Health Direct Australia 1800 022 222
- Parent Helpline 1300 364 100
- Local emergency department

In an emergency situation, please dial 000 for an ambulance.

For more information

Women's and Children's Division

Flinders Drive, Bedford Park, South Australia

Telephone: 8204 5511

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/SALHN



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