

Febrile Convulsions

Information for patients 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?

The cause of febrile convulsions is unclear. Despite the name - which means feverish convulsion - the fever does NOT cause the convulsion. Indeed the fever often comes on immediately AFTER the convulsion. The convulsion usually occurs at about the time that the temperature increases rapidly and most often occurs on the first day of the illness. It may be the first sign that your child is unwell.

There is some evidence that chemicals made by the body to fight infections cause the convulsion in children who carry the gene for 'febrile convulsions.'

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.

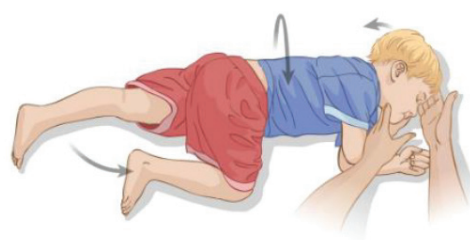
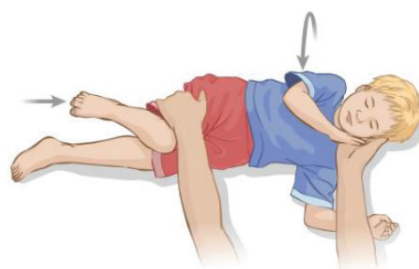
What do I do if my child has a febrile convulsion?

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 fit.

It is recommended that your child sees a doctor to find out the cause of the fever that has caused the febrile convulsion. page 1

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.

Your child will outgrow the tendency to have febrile convulsions when they are six years old.

Will my child have further febrile convulsions?

The majority of children do not have further febrile convulsions; however a minority may have several seizures during their childhood.

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

**Paediatric Unit,
Women's and Children's Division
Flinders Medical Centre
Bedford Park SA 5042
Telephone: 08 8204 5511
www.sahealth.sa.gov.au**



Interpreter



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