

Patient Information : Febrile Seizure



Cork Emergency Medicine

EMed.ie



Seeing your child have a febrile convulsion (fit) can be a very frightening experience. Many parents often think that their child is dead or dying when they first see a febrile convulsion. However, febrile convulsions are not as serious as they look. This sheet explains some facts about them.

What is a febrile convulsion?

It is a fit caused by a high temperature in a child usually aged between 6 months and 6 years old. A convulsion is an attack in which a person becomes unconscious and usually stiff with jerking of the arms and legs. It is caused by a storm of electrical activity within the brain. The words convulsion, fit, seizure; all mean the same thing. Febrile convulsions are very common. At least 1 child in 30 will have one or more.

What should I do if my child has another convulsion?

- Lie your child on his/her side with their head at slightly lower than the body.
- It is not necessary to do anything else.
- Do not try to place a gag in your child's mouth.
- Do not slap or shake your child
- Wait for the convulsion to stop

Usually the fit stops within 2 minutes. Your child may be drowsy afterwards but should be reviewed by a doctor. If your child is still fitting after 5 minutes, urgent help is advised. Call 112.

Is it epilepsy?

No. Epilepsy refers to fits without a fever, usually in older children or adults. Convulsions rarely lead to epilepsy. 99 out of 100 children with febrile convulsions never have further convulsions after they reach school age.



Patient Information : Febrile Seizure



Cork Emergency Medicine

EMed.ie



Do febrile convulsions cause permanent brain damage?

Almost never. In a study of nearly 2000 children, who were examined very carefully for evidence of permanent brain damage, none was found. It is thought that, very rarely, children who have a convulsion which lasts for half an hour or more, some permanent damage may result.

What brings on febrile convulsions?

Any illness which causes a high temperature (usually a cold or other virus infection). The illness that causes the high temperature is often mild apart from its effect in causing a fever and therefore increasing the risk of a fit. Treating the temperature is important. Of 10 children that have a febrile convulsion about 3 or 4 will have more than 1 convulsion. The risk of having another convulsion drops rapidly after the age of 3 years.

Does my child suffer discomfort or pain during a convulsion?

No. The child is unconscious and unaware of what is happening. They can be sleepy or slightly confused following the fit. The convulsion is always much more disturbing for the parents than it is for the child.

What should I do if my child has a fever?

- You can take your child's temperature with a thermometer under the armpit or by using a tympanic (ear) thermometer or a fever scan strip.
- If your child's temperature is above 37.5 you should take active steps to cool them down.
- Do not over-clothe children who have an illness causing a temperature and do not have the room temperature too warm.
- Give the child plenty of fluids to drink (preferably water or juice).
- Give them Paracetamol (Calpol or Disprol appropriate dosage instructions for your child's age).

If you are concerned, please contact the
Emergency Department you first attended:

Mercy University
Hospital
(021) 4271971

M-UCC at
SMHC (St.
Mary's Health
Campus)
(021) 4926900

CUH
(021) 4920200

Mallow General
Hospital
(022) 21251

Bantry General
Hospital
(027) 52900

