



Febrile convulsions



Cork Emergency Medicine

What is a febrile convulsion?

A febrile convulsion is a seizure or fit caused by a sudden change in your child's body temperature and is usually associated with fever.

Febrile convulsions can be frightening and upsetting to witness but they are not harmful to your child. Febrile convulsions do not cause brain damage and there is no increased risk of epilepsy in children who have had simple febrile convulsions.

One in 30 children will have a febrile convulsion between the ages of six months and six years old. Most children who have a febrile convulsion will only ever have just one, but one in three children will have another.

Treating a child's fever with paracetamol or ibuprofen will not prevent a febrile convulsion.

What do they look like?

During a febrile convulsion:

- Your child will usually lose consciousness
- They may become stiff and their arms and legs begin to jerk
- Their eyes may roll and they may wet or soil themselves
- Their face can turn red or blue and they may foam at the mouth or vomit

A febrile convulsion may last for several minutes. When the movements stop your child will regain consciousness but they will probably remain sleepy or irritated afterwards.

What should I do during a convulsion?

There is nothing you can do to make the convulsion stop

- The most important thing is to remain calm
- Place your child on a soft surface lying on their back or side
- Time how long the convulsion lasts if possible
- Do not restrain your child or put anything in your child's mouth (including your fingers)
- Do not put your child in the bath to lower their temperature
- It can be useful if you are able to record a video of the seizure
- Return to your GP or Emergency Department if your child has a second convulsion during the same illness

Content by [Dr Brian MacCarthy](#), [Dr Rory O'Brien](#) 20210818

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

Mercy University Hospital
(021) 230 5011

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

CUH
(021) 4920200

Local Injury Unit Mallow General Hospital
(022) 58506

Bantry General Hospital
(027) 52900



When should I get urgent help?

Contact an ambulance *immediately* if:

- A seizure lasts more than five minutes
- Another seizure starts soon after the first one ends
- Your child does not wake up when the convulsion stops
- Your child looks very sick when the convulsion stops
- Your child is having breathing difficulties

Care at home

In most cases you can look after your child at home after a doctor has reviewed them for a febrile convulsion

- They may be a little cranky for a day or so, this will pass
- Resume your usual routines
- Put them to sleep at their usual time in their own bed. Do not worry about trying to hear a convulsion – a bed or cot is a safe place for a febrile convulsion

Common questions

If my child has a febrile convulsion, does that mean they have epilepsy?

No. Febrile convulsions are fits or seizures that occur only with a fever. Children with epilepsy have repeated seizures without fever. Even if your child has multiple febrile convulsions, it still does not mean they have epilepsy. Children who have simple febrile convulsions do not have an increased risk of epilepsy.

Do febrile convulsions cause brain damage?

No. No matter how dramatic and frightening febrile convulsions may look, they do not cause brain damage. Even very long convulsions lasting an hour or more almost never cause any harm.

If my child has a febrile convulsion, will it happen again?

About one in three children will have more febrile convulsions with future febrile illnesses. Your child will outgrow the tendency to have febrile convulsions by the time they are about 6 years old. If your child has experienced a febrile convulsion, it is important for you to learn what to do if your child does have another.

Can I prevent my child from getting a febrile seizure by giving them paracetamol or ibuprofen?

No. Even though these medicines may help to reduce a fever, if your child is going to have a febrile convulsions, then it will happen. There is nothing you can do to prevent it.

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