

My Child has had a Febrile Convulsion



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What are febrile convulsions?

A febrile convulsion is a fit that can happen when a child has a fever. Febrile convulsions are sometimes called febrile seizures. They are relatively common and, in most cases, are not serious.

They are most common between the ages of six months and three years and tend to occur when a baby or child has a temperature of 38.5°C or above. High temperatures can often be caused by infections such as chicken pox, flu, ear infections and tonsillitis.

Febrile convulsions are not the same as epilepsy. Children with epilepsy have many seizures which are not related to high body temperature. The majority of children with febrile convulsions do not go on to develop epilepsy later in life.

How to recognise a febrile convulsion

These can present in many ways, often when a child's temperature suddenly increases. You may see one, or many of the symptoms listed below:

- Your child may become stiff, and then can become very floppy afterwards
- They may lose consciousness
- Their eyes can appear to roll into the back of their head
- Their arms and legs may twitch
- They can become very pale or go blue around the mouth
- Some children may also wet themselves

Types of febrile convulsion

There are two different types of febrile convulsions:

1. **Simple febrile convulsion** – These are the most common. They are classed as simple when the convulsion lasts less than 15 minutes, and does not reoccur again in the next 24 hours.
2. **Complex febrile convulsion** – These are less common and will have one or more of the following symptoms:
 - The convulsion lasts longer than 15 minutes
 - Your child only has symptoms in one part of their body (this is known as a partial or focal convulsion)
 - Your child has another convulsion within 24 hours of the first convulsions, or during the same period of illness
 - Your child does not fully recover from the convulsion within one hour

What to do during a febrile convulsion



Lay your child/baby in the recovery position by laying them on their side on a soft surface.



Stay with your child/baby and make a note of how long the convulsion lasts.



Call 999 for an ambulance.

DO NOT place anything in the mouth or attempt to give any medicines to the child whilst he/she is having a febrile convulsion as there is a slight chance they could bite their tongue.

What can I do to prevent a febrile convulsion?

You cannot prevent a febrile convulsion from happening, as it happens suddenly, often with no warning, when a child's temperature increases very quickly.

There is no medication which can prevent febrile convulsions, and giving regular Paracetamol and Ibuprofen will not reduce the chances of your child fitting again. It is not necessary to use medicines to treat your child's temperature, but if your child has a fever and is distressed or appears unwell, you can help to make them feel more comfortable by giving them Paracetamol or Ibuprofen (please read the instructions first) and removing any unnecessary clothing or bedding to keep your child cool. Do not sponge or bathe your child with cool water, and never give them aspirin.

Your Feedback

We want your visit to be as comfortable as possible - talk to the person in charge if you have any concerns. If the ward/department staff are unable to resolve it, then ask for our Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) information. Please be assured that raising a concern will not impact on your care.

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The hospital can arrange for an interpreter or person to sign to assist you in communicating effectively with staff during your stay. Please let us know.

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