

Febrile Convulsion in Children

A febrile convulsion is a fit or seizure that occurs in some children when they are febrile, that is have a high temperature (fever). The vast majority of febrile convulsions are not serious. Full recovery with no permanent damage is the rule.

When has a febrile convulsion happened? When has a fever happened?

About 1 in 30 children have a febrile convulsion sometime before their 6th birthday. Febrile convulsions most frequently occur between the ages of 18 months and three years; they are rare before six months and after six years.

What does a febrile convulsion look like?

The child may look hot and flushed, and their eyes may roll backwards. They may appear dazed and then become unconscious. Parts of the body may stiffen, then twitch or shake. It may last from a few seconds to several minutes (usually less than five minutes). The child may be sleepy for some time afterwards. An hour or so later the child often appears a lot better when their temperature has come down.

What first aid should I do for a febrile convulsion?

Lay the child on their side with their head level or slightly lower than the body (the recovery position).

Do not put your fingers into their mouth as you could push their tongue back and make the breathing worse.

Estimate the time it started.

You do not need to call an ambulance/999 unless;

it lasts longer than 5 minutes

the child does not improve quickly once a short convulsion is over.

another convulsion starts soon after the first one stops.

the child has difficulty breathing.

You should seek medical advice/see your doctor that day to make sure the fever is not due to a serious illness.

Can a febrile convulsion be prevented?

No.

It may seem logical that keeping a child's temperature down during an illness may prevent a febrile convulsion. (It is unclear what triggers the convulsion. It is possibly some body chemical that is released during certain feverish illnesses rather than the temperature itself. Most children with a high temperature do not have a convulsion.) However, it is common practice to keep a child cool when they have a feverish illness. This makes them more comfortable and **but it does not** prevent a febrile convulsion. If a child is hot, then the following will help to reduce the temperature and make them feel more comfortable;

Keep the child very lightly dressed, or take all their clothes off if the room is warm.

Give paracetamol (for example Calpol, Disprol, etc) or ibuprofen.

Offer cool drinks.



Will i have e again ?

Usually not. Of all the children who have one febrile convulsion about 1 in 3 will have a second one. Of those who have two, about 1 in 3 will have a third, and so on. A future febrile convulsion is more likely if the first occurs before 15 months of age, or if there is a family history of febrile convulsions in close relatives (father, mother, sister, brother). After the age of three, the chance of further fits reduces.

Will a febrile convulsion i damage ?

Not usually. It is almost unheard of for a child to come to harm from a febrile convulsion. Complete recovery is expected, even after fits lasting longer than average. Most illnesses which cause fever and febrile convulsions are the common coughs, colds, and virus infections which are not usually serious. However, the illness causing the fever is sometimes serious, for example pneumonia or meningitis.

The child should be seen by a doctor as soon as possible after a convulsion for a check over to rule out serious illness.

Is treatment needed?

No treatment is needed for a convulsion which

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