



FEBRILE SEIZURES

What are febrile seizures?

Febrile seizures are episodes of convulsions caused by fever. Occasionally, the seizure may be the first sign of the fever/illness. Febrile seizures are common, occurring in between 2 – 5% of children between 6 months – 5 years of age, with most happening under 3 years of age. Febrile seizures can run in families.

What does a febrile seizure look like?

A febrile seizure can take different forms, but most commonly, a child will have the following symptoms:

- Fever > 38° C (100.4°F)
- Loss of consciousness
- Stiffening of limbs following by jerky movements of limbs and head, eyes rolling upward
- Most febrile seizures last between 30 seconds to 2 minutes.

What should I do if my child has a febrile seizure?

- Try to stay calm, even though it may be a frightening experience
- Place your child on a flat, level surface if possible
- Remove any nearby objects that may cause danger
- Do not hold them down or place anything in their mouth
- Try to time how long the seizure goes for
- After the seizure stops, place your child on their side. There may be vomit or saliva, which you should wipe away if visible on the outside of the mouth
- Your child will likely be sleepy/disoriented for up to several hours after the seizure. It is fine to let them sleep.

When do we need to call 911?

- If the seizure is lasting over 3 minutes
- If your child is under 6 months
- You should take your child to the Emergency Department if there is more than 1 seizure in 24 hours, or if there are any other concerning symptoms (e.g. neck stiffness, rash)
- Even if the seizure is under 3 minutes, you should still let your child's Pediatrician or Family Physician know about the event. They may wish to see the child.



My child's illness is over...what is important to know?

- About 30% of children may have another febrile seizure. Recurrence is more common if the first seizure happens when they are under 1 year old or if there is a family history.
- A febrile seizure will not necessarily happen every time the child has a fever
- Development of seizures not brought on by fever (epilepsy) is rare. It is only slightly higher than the risk in the general population (~1%).
- Febrile seizures do not cause damage/permanent changes to the brain
- Children who have febrile seizures have the same intellectual achievement compared to those who do not have febrile seizures

Can anything be done to prevent another episode?

There are anti-seizure medications that can be used to prevent seizures, but these medications have serious side effects, need to be taken every day, and generally the risks outweigh the benefits for children with febrile seizures.

Ibuprofen (Advil) or acetaminophen (Tylenol) can help relieve your child's discomfort due to a fever, but will NOT prevent a febrile seizure from occurring.