

Febrile Seizures

What are febrile seizures?

Febrile seizures are tremors that are brought on by a fever. These happen in infants and small children. They usually happen as the child's temperature is rising. Many happen during the first day of a child's fever.

The child often passes out. Often both arms and legs jerk. Sometimes, the body will get stiff. There might be jerking in just part of the body, like an arm or leg on the same side of the body.

Most febrile seizures last one to two minutes. Sometimes they are very brief and at times much longer. Most children outgrow them by the time they are 5 years old.

How common are they?

About one in 25 children will have at least one febrile seizure. More than one third of these children will have more. They happen between the ages of 6 months and 5 years and are common in toddlers.

Are they harmful?

Most febrile seizures are not harmful. Since most febrile seizures stop on their own, they do not cause brain damage or learning problems. Most children who have them will **not** have seizures without fever after age 5. Most children who have them do not get epilepsy. Some children may later get epilepsy.

Risk Factors for Epilepsy

- Slow development.
- Seizures without fever in a family member.
- Febrile seizures that last longer than 15 minutes.

- Seizures that affect only one side of the body.

Prevention and Treatment

Medicine to lower fever may be used but this might **not** prevent a seizure. A sponge bath with lukewarm water (not cold water) may help reduce fever and make your child more comfortable.

Daily use of seizure medicine is not often recommended unless your child's seizures are long, complicated, or you live in an area where you cannot get medical care quickly.

Some children are given a medicine to stop or prevent a seizure only when the child has a fever.

Care During a Febrile Seizure

- Stay calm. Carefully watch your child.
- Place your child on the floor, ground, or bed.
- Do not hold your child down. Do not try to stop the body movements.
- Turn your child on their side. This helps saliva drain out of the mouth.
- Clear the area of any hard, sharp or hot objects that might harm your child.
- Do not place anything in the mouth during a seizure.
- Breathing can become irregular or there can be a color change around the lips. This is normal.
- After the seizure, your child might throw up. Keep your child on their side for a few minutes.
- Keep track of the time. If the seizure lasts longer than 5 minutes call 911.

- Ask your child's doctor if your child needs medicine to stop a long seizure.

More Information

Epilepsy Foundation
8301 Professional Place
Landover MD 20785
1-800-EFA-1000 (332-1000)
www.epilepsyfoundation.org

National Institute of Neurological
Disorders and Stroke
www.ninds.nih.gov

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 9/2020 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7291