

## **Your child has had a febrile convulsion**

We know it was a very frightening experience for you: you may even have thought that your child was dead or dying - many parents think that when they first see a febrile convulsion.

However, febrile convulsions are not as serious as they look. We have produced this leaflet so that you may have some facts about febrile convulsions.

### **What is a febrile convulsion?**

It is an attack brought on by a fever in a child usually aged between 6 months and 5 years.

### **Are febrile convulsions common?**

Yes. About one child in 30 will have had a febrile convulsion by the age of 5 years.

### **What is a convulsion?**

A convulsion is an attack in which the person becomes unconscious and usually stiff, with jerking of the arms and legs. It is caused by a storm of electrical activity of the brain.

The words convulsion, fit and seizure all mean the same thing.

### **What brings on febrile convulsions?**

Any illness which causes a high temperature may do it, usually a cold or other viral infection.

### **Will it happen again?**

Possibly. 3 or 4 out of 10 children will have more than one. The risk of having another gets rapidly less after the age of 3 years.

### **What should I do if my child has another convulsion?**

Lay them flat on their side, with their head at the same level or slightly lower than their body.

- Note the time (write it down if you can, without leaving your child). It is not necessary to do anything else
- Do not try to force anything into their mouth
- Do not slap or shake them
- Wait for the convulsion to stop

The hospital may have given you medicine to insert into your child's mouth or bottom. If the convulsion carries on for more than 5 minutes (by the clock), give this medicine as stated on the label.

This should stop the convulsion within 10 minutes. If it does not, bring him to hospital (dial 999 if necessary at this

stage). In any event, let your doctor know what has happened.

### **Is regular treatment with tablets of medicine necessary?**

Not usually. The doctors will explain to you if your child is thought to be suitable for regular treatment.

### **Is it epilepsy?**

No. The word epilepsy is applied to fits without fever, usually in older children or adults.

### **Do febrile convulsions lead to epilepsy?**

Rarely. 99 out of 100 children with febrile convulsions never have convulsions after they reach school age, and never have fits without fever.

### **Do febrile convulsions cause permanent brain damage?**

Almost never. In nearly 200 American children who were examined carefully for evidence of permanent damage following febrile convulsions, none was found. It is thought that, very rarely, a child who has a very prolonged febrile convulsion lasting for half an hour or more may suffer permanent damage from it.

## Does my child suffer pain or discomfort during a convulsion?

No, your child is unconscious and unaware of what is happening. The convulsion is much more disturbing to you than your child.

## What should I do if my child has a fever?

- You can take their temperature by placing the bulb of the thermometer under their armpit for three minutes with their arm held against their side
- Keep them cool
- Do not over-*clothe* them or overheat the room
- Get plenty of fluids to drink
- Give children's paracetamol to make them more comfortable
- Use the doses as shown on the paracetamol bottle
- You can repeat the dose after 4-6 hours until the temperature falls to normal

- **DO NOT** give more than four doses every 24 hours
- **DO NOT** use tepid sponging to bring his temperature down

If they seem ill, or has earache or a sore throat, let your doctor see them in case he needs any other

treatment such as antibiotics. (For most children with fever due to viral infection, antibiotics are **not** necessary).

**Disclaimer:**  
The medical information provided in this factsheet is for educational purposes only. This information should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice from your doctor. You should always contact your doctor if you are worried about your child's health. Your own doctor may recommend other treatments based on your child's individual circumstances.

# FEVER FITS

*(Febrile Convulsions)*



Parent Factsheet  
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