

Advice for carers of children who have suffered a febrile convulsion

Your child has had a febrile convulsion. Many young children suffer from them, although you may not have heard of them before.

What is a febrile convulsion?

A convulsion (or fit) happens when the brain sends out too many electrical messages. This causes a patient to jerk, stiffen or lose consciousness for a while – sometimes all three at once.

A “febrile convulsion” means a fit that has happened because of a high temperature (fever). The infection itself is not usually a serious one, but a medical assessment will help decide this.

Why does a high temperature cause a convulsion?

A child’s developing brain is very sensitive to fevers, especially between 6 months and 6 years of age. Sometimes the electrical activity in the brain goes out of control when the child is hot, causing them to have a fit.

1 out of every 30 children will have a febrile convulsion. If a parent had one when they were a child then the risk goes up to 1 out of every 5-10 children.

Will it happen again?

Possibly. 1 out of every 3 children who have a febrile convulsion will have another one (2 out of 3 will not have another one).

Only children get febrile convulsions and they will grow out of them by the age of 6 or 7.

Can I stop it happening again?

Possibly. Some children will have a febrile convulsion even if the temperature is not very high. Here are some tips:

- Check your child’s temperature if he or she is unwell or if there are infections going round the family.
- If he/she is hot and upset, you can give them paracetamol or ibuprofen syrup to keep the temperature down (depending on age). In most cases however, these medicines will not prevent a febrile convulsion. [See Febrile Child advice sheet]
- Remove a few items of clothing, even if they are shivering, but do not leave them completely uncovered. If the skin gets too cold this can prevent heat loss.

Keep the child’s bedroom temperature cool but not cold.

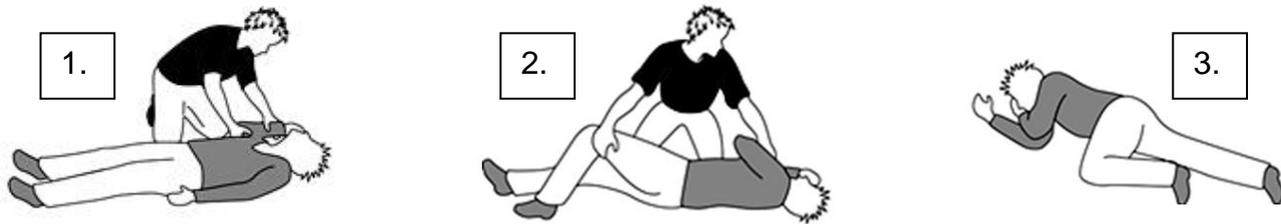
What do I do if they have another convulsion?

Stay with your child. Lie the child on his/her side with their head turned to one side to prevent choking if they vomit. See the recovery position on the next page.

Do not try to hold the child still, but move anything that might hurt them out of the way. Do not put anything in your child’s mouth, especially your fingers.

Try to make a note of how long the fit lasted. The hospital will want this information. If it lasts for longer than 5 minutes then you should dial 999 and ask for an ambulance. It is normal to be drowsy or fall asleep for a few minutes after a convulsion.

Recovery position



1. Raise the right arm so it is next to the patient's face
2. Bend the left arm across the chest, then roll the patient onto their side using their left arm and thigh
3. Place the left hand under the right cheek

Has my child got epilepsy?

This is very unlikely. For every 100 children who have a febrile convulsion, only 1 will go on to develop epilepsy. This is true even if they have a few febrile convulsions.

What about immunisations?

It is important that children have their immunisations to try to reduce childhood infections that can cause these problems and worse. You should discuss them with your GP or health visitor. A febrile convulsion is not normally a reason not to have immunisations.

Are you a victim of Domestic Violence? For confidential advice, contact:

Bradford	0808 2800 999	https://www.stayingput.uk.net/contact
North Yorkshire	03000 110 110	https://www.idas.org.uk/
Lancashire	0300 323 0085	https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/your-health-and-wellbeing/domestic-abuse/

If you require this leaflet in other languages or formats please telephone the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01535 294019

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