

Febrile seizures

What is a seizure?

A seizure or convulsion is a brief electrical disturbance in the brain. The child may lose consciousness and/or have muscle twitching.

Some seizures are caused by nervous system problems or brain infections, but a febrile seizure is caused by fever alone. The fever may have a variety of causes, including an ear infection or a cold.

Febrile seizures are very common. One in 25 children has a febrile seizure. These seizures most often occur in children between the ages of 6 months and 6 years.

Even though febrile seizures are very dramatic, they very rarely cause brain damage. Unfortunately, febrile seizures often reoccur. Almost half of the children who have a first febrile seizure will have another one. Children outgrow febrile seizures after 5 or 6 years of age.

What should I do during a seizure?

- Stay calm.
- Stay with your child.
- Place your child in a side-lying position with something soft under the head.
- **Do not** restrain your child, or put anything in his or her mouth.
- Check a clock to know the length of the seizure.
- Watch your child carefully for any arm, leg or eye movement - your doctor may want to know this information.
- Watch the breathing.

Who should I call for help?

Call the doctor if _____

Call 911 if

- seizure lasts longer than ____ minutes
- breathing stops longer than 15 seconds

What else do I need to know?

If your child has a fever, treat it with acetaminophen (Tylenol® or another brand). See the education sheet "Fever." However, constant attention to your child's temperature will not always be helpful in preventing another febrile seizure. Sometimes a recurrent seizure is the first sign of a fever.

A febrile seizure may occur at night when you and your child are sleeping. Since brief febrile seizures do not cause harm, missing a brief seizure is not important. The noises of a long febrile seizure would almost certainly awaken you. Your child can sleep in his or her own bed.

You and your child may do all the things that you normally do. Your child may go to daycare or be left with a responsible babysitter. It is best to explain to the babysitter or daycare provider what has happened and what to do if it happens again.

Questions?

This sheet is not specific to your child but provides general information. If you have any questions, please call the clinic.