



Seizures From a Fever

Febrile seizures are seizures from a fever. They usually happen to children between the ages of 6 months and 5 years of age.

What is a seizure from a fever (also called a febrile seizure)?

If your child is sick and has a fever, they could have a seizure.

A seizure is a sudden release of energy (electrical discharge) in the brain that causes changes in how your child moves or thinks.

Febrile seizures usually happen to children between the ages of 6 months and 5 years of age.

What does a seizure look like?

Often, muscles all over the child's body become stiff. The arms and legs may jerk. Your child will not know what is going on and probably will not be able to talk. Your child may:

- Pass out (become unconscious).
- Bite their tongue.
- Vomit or have a lot of spit in their mouth.
- Sometimes wet their pants or have a bowel movement.
- Have skin that looks blue while the seizure is happening, especially around the mouth.

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

- Stay calm.
- Watch the time so you know how long the seizure lasts.
- Do not try to hold your child still. You cannot stop the seizure.
- Make sure your child is lying safe on the floor or bed. Move things that might hurt or get tangled around your child's body.
- Turn your child on their side
- Put something under their head like a sweater or jacket.
- Do not put anything in your child's mouth or between their teeth. Your child will not swallow their tongue. You cannot stop your child from biting their tongue.
- Loosen tight clothing around the neck.
- Call your child's doctor right away if they are more than 6 years old.

When should I call 911?

- If your child does not start breathing or skin continues to look blue soon after the seizure stops--call 911 and start CPR.
- If the seizure lasts more than 4 minutes without any sign of slowing down.
- If your child gets hurt during the seizure or seems to be in pain.

How long do febrile seizures last?

Febrile seizures usually last 30 to 60 seconds. Some febrile seizures can last several minutes.

What should I do when the seizure is over?

- Make sure that your child can breathe by clearing their mouth of any spit or vomit. Do not try to do this during the seizure—they could bite down on your finger.
- Stay with your child until they are awake.
- Call your child's doctor. It is important to tell your child's doctor:
 - How long the seizure lasted
 - If your child's body was stiff all over or if one side of your child's body was more stiff and jerky than the other side

What can I do so febrile seizures will not happen?

Sometimes when a child is sick and has a fever they will have these kinds of seizures. Febrile seizures often happen when your child is first becoming sick. It is hard to stop a seizure, but there are some things you can do to help keep the fever down. To lower your child's fever:

- If your child's doctor says it is OK, give your child non-aspirin medicine, like Tylenol (acetaminophen) or ibuprofen.
- Dress your child in light clothing so that they will not be too warm.

Will my child need medicine to stop from having another seizure?

Your child will not usually need medicine if they have a febrile seizure. If your child has a certain kind of long-lasting febrile seizure, your child's doctor may give your child medicine to prevent or treat these seizures.

Will my child have febrile seizures again?

There is a chance your child may have another seizure if they get sick again with a fever. Most children outgrow febrile seizures by the time that they are about 6 years old.

Will a febrile seizure harm my child's brain?

A short febrile seizure will not hurt your child's brain. Seizures that last longer than 30 minutes could be dangerous. This is rare with a febrile seizure. Talk to your doctor to find out more.

To Learn More

- Neurology
206-987-2078
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Does my child have epilepsy?

Epilepsy means that a person has had more than one seizure **without a cause**. Since a febrile seizure is caused by fever, it is not called epilepsy. Children that have fever seizures have a very small chance of having epilepsy, not much higher than children who have not had febrile seizures.

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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