# Seizures From a Fever

This handout explains seizures from a fever (febrile seizures), signs that a seizure is happening, what to do during and after, when to call 911, and how to prevent them.

## What is a seizure from a fever (febrile seizure)?
A seizure is a sudden release of energy (electrical discharge) in the brain that causes changes in how your child moves or thinks. If your child is sick and has a fever, they could have a seizure.

Febrile seizures usually happen to children between the ages of 6 months and 5 years of age. This is their body’s reaction to certain illnesses that cause a fever. It can sometimes run in families.

## What does a seizure look like?
The muscles all over your child’s body become stiff or they may go completely limp. Their 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 or greyish while the seizure is happening, especially around the mouth.

## What should I do if my child has a febrile seizure?
- Stay calm.
- Record the start and end times, 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 safely 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. Do not reach into their mouth. Your child will not swallow their tongue. You cannot stop your child from biting their tongue.
- Loosen tight clothing around their neck.
- Call your child’s doctor right away if your child is more than 6 years old.

## How long do febrile seizures last?
- Febrile seizures usually last 30 to 60 seconds. Some febrile seizures can last several minutes.

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### To Learn More
- Neurology 206-987-2078
- Ask your child’s healthcare provider
- seattlechildrens.org

### Free Interpreter Services
- In the hospital, ask your 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.
### When should I call 911?
- If your child does not start breathing or skin continues to look blue or greyish 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.

### What should I do when the seizure is over?
- Make sure your child can breathe by clearing their mouth of any spit or vomit. Do not 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 1 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, sometimes even before you know they are sick. Even if you give antifever medicines at the first sign of fever, a child may still have a febrile 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 acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin or Advil).
- Dress your child in light clothing, so they are not 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 you 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 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.