



Emergency Department

Febrile Convulsions

Information for parents and carers

Introduction

This leaflet aims to give you general information about febrile convulsions (fits) in children and what you should do if your child has a febrile convulsion.

What is a febrile convulsion?

A febrile convulsion is usually caused by a rapid rise in a child's body temperature – often at the start of an illness. This rapid rise in temperature can make the brain irritable and trigger a fit in some children.

About 1 in 20 children under age of five will have a febrile convulsion. Although the convulsion may be upsetting for you to watch, it does not cause any permanent damage to your child.

Why has my child had a febrile convulsion?

Febrile convulsions are common in children under five years. Boys tend to suffer more than girls and children whose parents have a history of convulsions are more likely to have one. In most cases however, the child is otherwise perfectly normal.

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

- place your child on his / her side in a clear space on the floor
- **do not** try to hold your child during the fit
- **do not** try to put anything in your child's mouth
- stay with your child until the febrile convulsion stops – usually in a few minutes

What should I do if the febrile convulsion doesn't stop?

If the febrile convulsion does not stop in five minutes dial 999 for an ambulance.

Stay with your child and keep them on their side.

Will it happen again?

Most children do not have more than one febrile convulsion, but there are some who will have more – either with the same illness or another one.

About a third of children will have another febrile convulsion, but this should get better as they get older.

Can I do anything to stop it happening again?

There is no good way to prevent febrile convulsions. Although paracetamol or ibuprofen may help keep your child comfortable, they will not prevent a febrile convulsion even if given regularly.

Could my child have been damaged by the febrile convulsion?

- Febrile convulsions do not cause epilepsy. Some children who suffer repeated febrile convulsions will go on to have a diagnosis of epilepsy later, but these are a very small number.
- Febrile convulsions do not cause brain damage. Even though they may look frightening, children recover completely from febrile convulsions and return to normal.

Should I bring my child to hospital if they have another febrile convulsion?

If your child has another febrile convulsion at home which settles by itself – either as part of this illness or in the future - you should let your doctor (GP) know. They should be checked over by your doctor, but don't need to rush to the Accident & Emergency Department (A & E) if your child is otherwise well.

If you do have any concerns we will be happy to see your child in A & E.

This leaflet only gives general information. You must always discuss the individual treatment of your child with the appropriate member of staff. Do not rely on this leaflet alone for information about your child's treatment.

This information can be made available in other languages and formats if requested.

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