



# Febrile Seizures Information for Parents

## What are febrile seizures?

Febrile seizure (FS) is a convulsion (body jerking with loss of consciousness) related to a feverish illness over 38°C, due to an infection (but not meningitis). A child with FS has never suffered a seizure without a fever previously. FS are frightening for parents, but rarely cause harm unless they last a long time. FS are common in children 1 to 5 years.

FS do not affect your child's development and it is rare for a child to develop epilepsy following a straight forward ('simple') FS. About 3% of all children will have at least one FS. One third of children who have had one FS will have another.

## What happens during a febrile seizure?

During a febrile seizure, your child's body will become stiff, they will lose consciousness, and their arms and legs will twitch/jerk (a convulsion). Their breathing is often abnormal with noisy/choking sound and they can have blue lips. FS mostly lasts 1-3 minutes. Once it has stopped your child will be drowsy and confused. It may take up to an hour to recover.

## Can febrile seizures be prevented?

It is unclear if controlling a fever will prevent FS, but common practice is to keep a child cool when they have a feverish illness, which will make them feel more comfortable. Invest in a good thermometer and check for a fever if they feel hot. Ways to control a fever includes:-

- Paracetamol (Calpol/ Disprol) and ibuprofen (Junifen/ Neurofen).
- Reducing your child's clothing down to a vest and pants.
- Frequent cool drinks.
- Use of electric fans to cool the air, but not directed straight onto your child.

Do not give your child a cool bath or tepid sponging as this brings the outer body temperature down quickly, and can increase the inner body temperature.

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

- **Do** stay with your child and note the time it started.
- **Do** make sure your child does not hurt themselves during the convulsion.
- **Do** call an ambulance if the convulsion lasts more than five minutes, or your child remains unresponsive after an hour.
- **Do** lie your child on their side **after** the seizure, when they are floppy, this helps any moisture drain out of the mouth.
- **Do not** lay your child on their side during a seizure, unless they are vomiting.
- **Do not** put anything between your child's teeth, or in their mouth. Their abnormal breathing will improve once the FS stops.
- **Do not** bring your child to hospital yourself whilst they are having a convulsion.

### **What will happen if my child has to be admitted to hospital?**

The nurses and doctors will carefully monitor your child's condition. The nurses will make regular observations of your child's temperature, pulse, breathing and wakefulness. The doctor will prescribe medicines such as paracetamol if your child has a temperature.

We will try and find the infection that has caused the FS. Urine and blood tests may be needed. If your child has a suspected bacterial infection, antibiotics will be prescribed. If your child had prolonged FS (over 5 minutes), carers may be taught to give a medicine to a child with on-going FS of greater than 5 minutes.

### **What can you do to help in hospital?**

- Stay with your child as much as possible.
- Tell your nurse if your child feels hot.
- Offer small, frequent, cool, fluids. Talk with your nurse about filling in a fluid record together.
- Don't worry if your child is not eating very much. Fluids are more important when your child has a temperature. They drink better when their fever improves.
- Dress your child in light clothing.
- Bring some socks or slippers from home to keep your child's feet warm.

### **How can I care for my child at home?**

- Continue to offer regular cool drinks.
- Look for signs that your child is dehydrated, if not drinking - sunken eyes, dry mouth, not passing urine.
- Check your child during the night.
- Keep your child away from nursery or school while they have a raised temperature.

### **When should I seek further medical advice?**

- If your child develops a non blanching rash (a rash that does not disappear with pressure), seek urgent help.
- If your child's health gets worse, particularly not waking up properly.
- If the fever last for more than 5 days.
- If you are worried about your child's health.
- If your child has frequent or prolonged febrile seizures and/or is over 5 years old.
- If your child has spontaneous seizures without fever, they should be referred an epilepsy specialist at this hospital.

### **Please ring for advice up to 48 hours after admission.**

Starlight Children's ward Tel: 0161 291 2248

Starlight Children's Observation & Assessment Unit Tel: 0161 291 5459

Wythenshawe Hospital

Southmoor Road

Wythenshawe

M23 9LT

Community nurse team.....

Further information:

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk) feverish illness in children  
[www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk) > [Information Leaflets](#) July 08

