

Children's Emergency Department

Febrile convulsion - parent/carer discharge information



A febrile convulsion is a fit or a seizure that occurs in children when they have a high fever. They can happen in children from the age of 6 months up to the age of 5 years. The fit can last from a few seconds to a few minutes and is followed by drowsiness. Most fits last less than 2 to 3 minutes.

Febrile convulsions are common and 1 in 30 children will have one during their childhood. Febrile convulsions only happen when there is a sudden rise in body temperature during a viral or, more rarely, a bacterial illness or infection. The fit occurs because a child's developing brain is more sensitive to fever than the full-grown brain of an adult.

It is recognised that febrile convulsions tend to run in families; the reasons for this are unknown. The fit can be very frightening for parents to witness. Children will lose consciousness, roll their eyes upwards, twitch and jerk their arms and legs, go blue, have difficulty breathing and foam at the mouth. Your child may take 10 to 15 minutes to wake up properly afterwards and may be irritable during this time. They may appear disorientated and not recognise you. All of this is normal and expected.

Children do not suffer pain or discomfort during a fit and a febrile convulsion is not epilepsy, nor does it indicate an increased risk of future epilepsy. Short-lived febrile convulsions do not cause brain damage and even long fits almost never cause harm. 30% of children who have one febrile convulsion will suffer another, and there is no way of predicting who will be affected or when. The risk decreases after the age of 3.



Patient Information

What should I do if my child has another fit?

- Stay calm and do not panic
- Ensure your child is safe by placing them on the floor and removing any objects that they could knock against
- Once the fit has stopped, place your child in the 'recovery position' on their side with their face turned towards the floor
- Do not force anything into your child's mouth
- Do not restrain or shake your child
- Note what time the fit started and stopped – your doctor will ask you
- **Have your child checked by a medical professional as soon as possible after the fit stops.**

Return to school/activity

You will need to inform the nursery/school that your child has had a febrile convulsion so that they can observe your child for any unusual behaviour/high temperatures.

In what circumstances should I telephone 999?

- If the fit lasts longer than 5 minutes, as drugs may be needed to stop the fit.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact 024 7696 6934 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

To give feedback on this leaflet please email feedback@uhcw.nhs.uk

Document History

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