Treatment

• Try to stay calm.
• Lay your child on the floor, on their side. This will help prevent choking by allowing vomit and secretions to drain out of the mouth.
• Do not hold the child down. Loosen clothing around the neck.
• Do not put anything in the child’s mouth. Remove any objects or vomit from the mouth.
• Stay with the child and note how long the convulsion lasts – usually a few minutes.
• It is normal for your child to be sleepy after a convulsion.

When and where to seek help

- If the convulsion continues beyond 5 minutes, dial 999 to call an ambulance.
- Your child should be seen by their GP as soon as possible after a convulsion to rule out serious illness.
- Seek medical help immediately by phoning your GP or NHS Direct if:
  o this is the first time your child has had a convulsion
  o they do not improve quickly after the convulsion
  o the child has breathing difficulties
  o a second convulsion starts soon after the first.

If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet please ask your GP, Health Visitor or paediatric nurse, or telephone NHS Direct on 0845 4647.

If you have the opportunity to complete a first aid course then please do so. You never know when you will need it.

Febrile Convulsions

www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
0845 46 47

This leaflet was written by Dr N Prince, Paediatric SHO, Mayday University Hospital.
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This leaflet explains what a febrile convulsion is and gives advice on what to do if your child has one. It may not cover everything. If you have questions, please ask.

What is a febrile convulsion?
A fit (seizure) caused by a high temperature. Sometimes febrile convulsions are the first sign a child has a fever. They can be frightening as they look like epileptic fits. Most last less than 5 minutes.

What happens during a convulsion?
- The child may be hot and flushed
- They become dazed, black out and may fall if sitting or standing.
- Eyes may roll backwards
- Muscles tighten and twitch. They may cry out of moan.
- The child may appear to stop breathing and turn slightly blue.
- The child may wet or soil themselves
- They often fall into a deep sleep afterwards

What causes febrile convulsions?
Febrile convulsions can happen as a result of any illness that causes a high temperature. Viral infections are most common, such as a cold or an ear infection.

It is important to find out what illness is causing the fever as soon as possible after the fit. There is a small chance your child could have meningitis or other infections requiring treatment.

Who can have febrile convulsions?
Any child, usually between 6 months and 6 years of age. Up to 3 children in every 100 may have them.

Will it happen again?
Children who have had one febrile convulsion are more likely to have another, either during the same illness or a future one. Often a close relative will have had febrile convulsions.

Can I prevent them happening?
There is no evidence that febrile convulsions can be prevented, even by treating the fever.

What should I do if my child has a high temperature?
Lowering the child’s temperature may make them feel more comfortable. Ensure they are not heavily clothed and maintain good intake of fluids.

Sponging with tepid water is not recommended.

If your child is uncomfortable, give paracetamol or ibuprofen as soon as they have recovered enough to swallow. Follow instructions on the medication packaging.

Will there be any permanent brain damage?
There is no evidence that simple febrile convulsions cause any lasting damage or learning difficulties.

Does my child have epilepsy?
A very small number of children go on to have epilepsy (fits without fevers), but not because of the febrile convulsion.

Is there any treatment?
Occasionally a child may be referred to a paediatrician for assessment. A drug called diazepam may be given: parents will be educated about how and when to use it.

What about immunisations?
Your child should be immunised as normal. Very occasionally immunisations can cause febrile convulsions 8-14 days afterwards.

Other Injuries
Your child may have fallen or bitten their tongue during the seizure. Seek medical treatment if there are any serious injuries such as broken bones.