

CARING FOR YOUR CHILD WITH FEVER SEIZURES

Children aged 6 months to 5 years old with a temperature higher than 100° F may have a seizure. The cause is unknown, and most fever seizures are harmless.



F. Netter M.D.



During a fever seizure, your child may have muscle contractions, lose consciousness for 30 seconds to 5 minutes, clench the teeth, and turn blue.



After a seizure, your child may have a headache, feel sleepy, confused, or scared, and forget things that happened during the seizure.

What Are Fever Seizures?

Fever (or febrile) seizures are a type of convulsion that occurs when a child has a high temperature (usually more than 100° F). They almost always occur in children aged 6 months to 5 years and are rare in older children.

What Causes Fever Seizures?

The cause is unknown. The high temperature is believed to interfere with the normal function of the brain, which causes a brief short circuit in brain activity.

What Are the Symptoms of Fever Seizures?

Symptoms are similar to those of an epileptic attack. The most common symptoms are loss of consciousness that lasts from 30 seconds to 5 minutes or more, muscle contractions in the whole body that last 15 to 20 seconds, trouble breathing, loss of control of bladder or bowels (stool), biting the tongue or cheek, clenched jaw or teeth, and skin turning blue.

More symptoms after the seizure are headache, sleepy feeling, confusion and fear, and memory loss (forgetfulness) of things that happened during the seizure.

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When your child is having a seizure, remain calm, rest the child on his or her side to prevent choking on saliva, and don't restrain the child's movements.



Call 911 if a seizure lasts more than 10 minutes.

How Are Fever Seizures Diagnosed?

The health care provider will make a diagnosis from the description of the seizure (as described by parents) during the fever. The health care provider may ask about injections (shots) given during 2 weeks before the seizure to make sure that the shots didn't cause the seizure. The health care provider may also ask about medicines (prescription or over-the-counter), vitamins, or supplements to rule out bad reactions to drugs.

Tests may be done to find more serious causes. These tests include electroencephalography (for epilepsy) and others to rule out meningitis and encephalitis.

How Are Fever Seizures Treated?

Almost all febrile seizures are harmless, so drugs aren't usually given to prevent more seizures. Avoiding fever and overheating may help, but this is very hard to do in children. Make sure that your child sleeps enough, drinks plenty of fluids, and eats healthy food.

It is very unusual for a febrile seizure to last more than 10 minutes. Some children may have another febrile seizure at some time. Children rarely need treatment.

DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Fever Seizures:

- ✓ **DO** put your child on his or her side during a seizure, to avoid choking on saliva.
- ✓ **DO** remain calm. It's normal to be scared during and after seeing a seizure, but you'll be better able to comfort your child if you stay in control.
- ✓ **DO** call your local emergency number if the seizure lasts more than 10 minutes.
- ✓ **DO** call your health care provider if your child has seizures often.

- ⊗ **DON'T** put anything in your child's mouth.
- ⊗ **DON'T** restrain your child's movements during the seizure.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following sources:

- Epilepsy Foundation
Tel: (800) EFA-1000 (332-1000)
Website: <http://www.epilepsyfoundation.org>
- American Academy of Family Physicians
Tel: (800) 274-2237
Website: <http://www.aafp.org>
- American Academy of Neurology
Website: <http://www.neurology.org>