



PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

PEDIATRICS

Febrile Seizures

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WHAT IS A FEBRILE SEIZURE?

Febrile seizures are convulsions triggered by a rapid rise in body temperature, usually as a result of an infection.¹ This disrupts brain activity, leading to loss of consciousness, irregular breathing, and jerking movements, which typically last under 5 minutes. Febrile seizures typically happen within a few hours of illness and with a fever above 102°F (39°C), but they can also occur at lower temperatures or before any symptoms appear.²

Who Is at Risk?

Febrile seizures affect 2%-5% of children aged 6 months to 5 years, but they most commonly occur between 12 and 18 months.³ Risk is higher in children with an underlying neurologic disorder or a family history of febrile seizures.³

Are They Dangerous?

In most cases, febrile seizures are not harmful and do not lead to neurologic problems or developmental delays.³

Will My Child Have More Seizures?

Around 30% of children who have a febrile seizure will have another, but this risk decreases as they get older.³ Children who experience a febrile seizure have a slightly higher risk of developing lifelong seizures, about 1% more than the general population.⁴ Although fever-reducing medications like acetaminophen or ibuprofen can help ease the discomfort of a fever, there is no medication to prevent developing a febrile seizure.

What to Do if Your Child Is Having a Febrile Seizure

Although distressing to witness, stay calm and monitor the child to ensure their safety.

FIGURE 1: Recovery position.⁶



- **Protect your child from injury:** Ensure they're in a safe place, like on the floor or in bed, with enough space to move freely without injury.
- **Position your child:** Gently turn your child onto their side into the recovery position (Figure 1). This will allow vomit or saliva to drain and minimize choking.
- **Do not place anything in their mouth:** A common misconception; don't put anything in their mouth or try to hold their tongue, as this can cause harm.
- **Postseizure care:** After the seizure, your child may feel confused or sleepy. Let them rest as they gradually recover.
- **Seek medical care:** Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department if a seizure lasts more than 5 minutes, or if the child doesn't wake up or return to normal afterward. Be sure to follow up with your pediatrician to discuss the febrile seizure.

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