

# Febrile convulsions

Paediatric  
department

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[yeovilhospital.nhs.uk](http://yeovilhospital.nhs.uk)

The logo for Yeovil Hospital Healthcare, featuring a stylized 'Y' inside a circle with a rainbow-colored border.  
Yeovil Hospital  
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Febrile convulsions (or fit) are quite common in children and can be very frightening experience for parents. However, the vast majority of cases are not serious.

It is not epilepsy.

## What is a febrile convulsion?

A febrile convulsion is a seizure (a 'fit') which happens when a child has a high temperature (fever).

They usually occur between the ages of six months and six years.

Any illness that causes fever can cause a febrile convulsion.

## Are febrile convulsions common?

Yes. About three in every 100 children will have at least one febrile convulsion by the age of six.

## How do I recognise a febrile convulsion or fit in my child?

- Your child may look hot and flushed
- During the convulsion, they may be dazed or confused and then lose consciousness. The child may roll their eyes, become stiff or floppy with twitching or shaking of their arms and legs. They may stop breathing briefly.
- The convulsion usually lasts less than five minutes and your child may be irritable or sleepy afterwards.
- Complete recovery normally within one hour.

## What should I do when my child has a febrile convulsion?

- Try to keep calm.
- Lay the child on their side with their head level or slightly below the body (the recovery position).
- Wait for convulsion to stop.
- Do not put anything into the mouth, but gently remove anything that could interfere with breathing (eg. dummy).
- Do not shake or try to restrain the child.
- Loosen clothing, especially around the neck.
- Stay with the child during the fit and if possible, time the episode.
- Once child is fully conscious, try giving Calpol or ibuprofen to reduce the child's temperature.

## Will it happen again?

- In most cases, only one convulsion occurs. However, one in three children will have more than one episode.
- A future febrile convulsion is more likely if there is a history of febrile convulsions in close relatives.
- Very few (about one in every 100) with febrile convulsion may go on to develop epilepsy later in life.

## Do febrile convulsions cause permanent brain damage?

- Almost never and children recover fully following a febrile convulsion.
- In rare cases, prolonged febrile fit lasting 30 minutes or more could lead to some damage to the brain.

## What should I do if my child has a high temperature (fever)?

- Give your child Calpol or ibuprofen to help lower the temperature.
- Cool the room and removing layers of clothing or bed clothes.
- Give regular cool sips of water or juice to keep them well hydrated.
- Consult your GP if you are worried.

**Dial for an ambulance if:**

- **The convulsion lasts more than five minutes or your child does not improve afterwards.**
- **Your child looks unwell, or appears to have breathing difficulties.**
- **Another seizure starts soon after the first.**

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact:

**Paediatric Assessment Unit (PAU)**  
**(9am-9pm):**  
**01935 384 788**

**Children's Ward**  
**(9pm-9am):**  
**01935 384 360**

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