

Febrile Seizures

What are febrile seizures?

- Febrile seizures are seizures that happen only when your child has a fever. They normally occur as your child's temperature is rising. These seizures are very common. They occur in about 1 out of 20 preschool children. About 1 out of 3 of children who have had a febrile seizure will have another one with another fever.
- Most children will outgrow febrile seizures by the time they are five years old. These seizures tend to run in families.

How do they affect my child?

Most often febrile seizures are short and last less than five minutes. They almost always stop on their own. They do not cause brain damage, learning disabilities or any other problems. If your child has one, it does not mean they will have epilepsy.

How are they treated?

- Medicines may be used to reduce fever. Your doctor or nurse will tell you what medicine to give, how much to give and how often to give it.
- If your child has had a febrile seizure in the past, you may be told to give the medicine at the first sign of a fever.
- **Do not** give your child aspirin for fever.
- A sponge bath with luke-warm water (not cold) may help reduce your child's fever. Never use iced or cold water or rubbing alcohol to reduce fever.
- Dress your child in lightweight clothing. This will keep your child more comfortable with a fever. It will also help keep a fever manageable.

How do I care for my child during a febrile seizure?

- Stay calm. Even though you feel scared, you must stay calm so that you can help your child.
- Help your child lie down in a safe place.
 - Do not hold your child down or try to stop the movements.
 - Loosen your child's clothes and put something soft under the head.
 - Clear the area of hard, sharp or hot objects that may harm your child.
- Do not force anything between your child's teeth. This could hurt you or your child. Your child will not swallow their tongue.
- Gently roll your child onto one side. This helps saliva drain from the mouth.

Care during a seizure (continued)

- Your child's breathing may be irregular with a seizure. This is normal.
- Watch your child during the seizure.
 - Use a watch or clock to time how long the seizure lasts.
 - Write down which parts of the body were moving during the seizure.
 - Notice any color change your child may have.
 - Notice if your child stops breathing.
- Stay with your child until the seizure is over. Watch your child for a few minutes to be sure your child is breathing well and that another seizure is not going to happen. Call the doctor as soon as you can when the seizure is over.
- Give rectal diazepam (Diastat®) for any seizure that lasts longer than 5 minutes.
- After the seizure, your child may throw up. Keep your child on their side so saliva and vomit can drain after the seizure.

ALERT: Call 9-1-1 if your child:

- Has one seizure followed by another seizure without waking up.
- Has a seizure that lasts for more than 5 minutes.
- Was given rectal diazepam for the first time.

ALERT: Call your child's doctor, nurse, or clinic if you have any questions or concerns or if your child has:

- A seizure.
- Special health care needs that were not covered by this information.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.