NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S
When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.℠

Helping Hand™

Fever and Seizures (Febrile Seizures)

Babies and children often have illnesses with fever. For most children fever causes only minor discomfort that can be relieved with acetaminophen (such as Children's Tylenol® and Infant Tylenol drops) or ibuprofen (Children's Motrin®). But in a few children, fever can bring on a seizure at some time during childhood. Convulsions that are brought on by a rise in temperature are called *febrile (FEB-rill) seizures.*

Facts about Febrile Seizures

- Brief seizures that are brought on by a fever are not harmful to the child. They do not cause brain damage, but they can be very upsetting to parents.
- Febrile seizures are common. Between 4% and 10% of children will have one at some time - usually between the ages of 6 months and 5 years.
- **Febrile seizures do not mean your child has epilepsy. Epilepsy is a different condition. With epilepsy the person has repeated seizures but no fever.**

Picture 1 Place your child on his side on a soft surface.

Signs of a Febrile Seizure

- The muscles stiffen and jerk or twitch.
- The child often loses consciousness.
- When the movements stop, the child "comes to" but may be quite groggy.

What You Can Do

There is nothing you can do to make the seizure stop. The most important thing is for you to stay calm.

1. Place your child on a soft surface, lying on his side (Picture 1). **Do not restrain the child and do not put anything in his mouth.**
2. Look to see exactly how your child moves and how he responds to you so you can describe it later.

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What You Can Do, continued

3. Time how long the seizure lasts. If the seizure stops in less than 5 minutes, contact your child's doctor for further instructions.
4. If the seizure lasts more than 5 minutes, call 911 immediately for emergency services. Medicine can be given by the emergency squad to stop the seizure.
5. If your child becomes dusky (turns blue) for more than 3 minutes, call 911.

After the Seizure

Your child may be a little cranky for a day or so, but this is probably related to his or her illness. There is no need to change your life style or the way you care for your child.

- Your child can safely sleep in his own bed or crib. Be sure to remove extra pillows and soft toys from the bed. For a preschooler, you may want to think about using guard rails on the bed.
- If your child is acting sick and has other signs of illness, follow your doctor's advice as you normally would.

Picture 2 Follow your child's doctor's instructions for giving fever medicines.

Almost a third of children who have had one seizure will have one or more others. Usually they outgrow febrile seizures after 5 years of age.

Prevention

Talk with your child's doctor about ways to prevent fevers in the future. But remember, in some children, a seizure is the first sign that the child has a fever.

- You can give your child acetaminophen or ibuprofen to lower the fever and make him more comfortable, but this may not ward off a seizure. Ask your doctor about the right dose and schedule for giving the medicine. **Caution: Acetaminophen comes in several different strengths. Be very sure you are giving the right one.**
- Give your child acetaminophen or ibuprofen before using fans or cool sponge baths to lower his temperature. Undress your child when indoors. Do not cover him with blankets.
- If your child is having febrile seizures very often, his doctor may prescribe a medicine to use. If this is the case, follow the doctor's instructions.

If you have any questions, be sure to ask your child's doctor or nurse, or call _____.