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Febrile Seizures (or Convulsions)

What is a Febrile Seizure?

- A febrile seizure is a fit that occurs when a child has a fever. It's a relatively common childhood condition and not serious in most cases.
- Febrile seizures are also sometimes called febrile convulsions.
- During most seizures the child's body becomes stiff, they lose consciousness and their arms and legs twitch. Some children may wet themselves.

What causes febrile seizures?

- The cause of febrile seizures is unknown, although it is linked to the start of a fever – a high temperature of 38°C (100.4°F) or above.
- In most cases, a high temperature is caused by an infection, such as: chickenpox, flu (influenza), middle ear infections, tonsillitis.
- The chances of having a seizure are increased if a close family member has a history of them. Around 1:4 children affected by febrile seizures has a family history of the condition.

What should a parent (or a crèche) do, if a febrile seizure happens?

- Place the child in the recovery position. Lay them on their side, on a soft surface, with their face turned to one side. This will stop them swallowing any vomit. It will keep their airway open and help to prevent injury.
- Stay with the child and try to make a note of how long the seizure lasts.
- If it is a child's first seizure, or if it lasts longer than 5 minutes, take them to A&E as soon as possible or call 999 for an ambulance. While it is unlikely that there is anything seriously wrong, it is best to be sure.
- If the child has had febrile seizures before, and the seizure lasts for less than 5 minutes, phone their GP, CareDoc or A&E for advice.
- Try not to put anything, including medication, in the child's mouth during a seizure as there is a slight chance that they might bite their tongue.

How to manage high temperature in a child?

Paracetamol, Ibuprofen, removing any unnecessary clothes and bedding will help to lower a child's temperature, but a febrile seizure may still occur regardless.