

# Seizures



A **seizure** is like a short-circuit in the brain. Information in nerves in the brain gets mixed up. There are many forms of **seizures**.

A **general seizure**. This affects the whole brain. A **convulsion** happens with this kind. These are signs of a convulsion.

- The neck muscles or all the body muscles get stiff.
- The arms or legs jerk around.
- The eyes roll up and back in the head.
- The child falls down.
- The child blacks out.
- The child wets or soils his or her clothes.

An **absence seizure**. A **convulsion** does not happen with this kind of seizure.

- These are signs of this kind of seizure:
- The child stares into space. It looks like the child is not paying attention.
  - The child smacks his or her lips.
  - The child may blink over-and-over.

## Seizures that come with a high fever.

In fact, high fevers cause *most* seizures in children ages 6 months to 5 years old. This happens when the body's own **temperature** control isn't working just right yet.

Sicknesses that make a child's temperature go up fast can bring on seizures. Here are some other causes of **seizures**:

- **Epilepsy.**
- Poisons.
- **Infections** that cause a high fever.
- Drugs.
- **Reye's Syndrome.** (See at [www.HealthyLearn.com](http://www.HealthyLearn.com).)
- Snakebites.
- Some vaccinations.



*Poisons in the House*

Most **seizures** last from 1 to 5 minutes. Short seizures don't cause problems unless the child stops breathing and turns blue. But a seizure that lasts longer than 5 minutes can be a sign of a big problem. Let your child's doctor know if your child has any kind of seizure.



## How to Keep Your Child From Getting Fever Seizures

Try to bring your child's fever down fast:

- Dress your child in light, loose clothes or take off most of his or her clothes.
- Ask your doctor about fever-lowering **suppositories**.
- Put washcloths rinsed in lukewarm (not cold) water on your child's forehead and neck. *Don't* use rubbing alcohol.
- Give your child **acetaminophen** or **ibuprofen**. Make sure you give the right kind and dose for his or her weight. Do this if the fever gets above 103°F. (*Note:* Do not give aspirin. Aspirin and other medicines that have **salicylates** have been linked to **Reye's Syndrome**. See "Signs of Reye's Syndrome" at [www.HealthyLearn.com](http://www.HealthyLearn.com).)

Keep trying to bring the fever down until it is 101°F or less.

## Questions to Ask

Take a class in emergency first aid for children to learn when and how to respond to seizures.

Has the child stopped breathing?

YES



NO

(*Note:* Call 9-1-1 or your local rescue squad! Follow advice given.)

Does the seizure last more than 5 minutes?

YES



NO

Did the seizure come with any of these things?

- A head injury.
- A heat stroke.
- Electric shock.
- Poisoning.

YES



NO

Is this your child's first seizure? Or is your child younger than 6 months old or older than 5 years old?

YES



NO



*Self-Care Tips on next page*



## Self-Care Tips

*Don't panic!* A fever seizure will stop by itself in a few minutes. The two things you can do are:

- Try to keep your child from getting hurt during the seizure.
- Lower his or her fever.

Follow these tips *during* the seizure:

- Protect your child from falling and hitting his or her head. (Watch out for tables and sharp things.)
- Make sure your child can breathe:
  - Roll the child on his or her side so spit can drain from the mouth.
  - Gently pull on the jaw and bend the neck back. (This opens up the throat.)
- *Don't* put anything in your child's mouth. Children hardly ever bite their tongues during a fever seizure.
- *Don't* give your child any medicine, food, or drink by mouth.

Follow these tips *after* the seizure:

- If the seizure was from a fever, start lowering the fever. Sponge your child's body with lukewarm water. *Don't* use rubbing alcohol. *Don't* put the child in a bathtub. *Don't* use an ice pack. It drops the temperature too fast.
- Your child will probably be sleepy after the seizure. He or she may not remember anything. This is O.K.
- Dress the child in light, loose clothes. Put him or her to sleep in a cool room.
- Let your child's doctor know about the seizure.

