

Although febrile seizures are frightening, they do not cause brain damage, and the likelihood of developing epilepsy or recurrent non-febrile seizures is very small.

Risk Factors for the Development of Epilepsy:

1. Suspect or abnormal development before the seizure
2. Family history of epilepsy
3. Complex first febrile seizure.

No risk factors- 2% risk for developing epilepsy

1 risk factor - 3% risk for developing epilepsy

2 risk factors - 13% risk for developing epilepsy

Risk Factors for Recurrence of Febrile Seizures:

1. Young age (usually considered less than 1 year old)
2. Family history of febrile seizures
3. Relatively low fever at the time of the initial seizure (usually <101.0 F)
4. Short duration of fever prior to the initial seizure

If another seizure occurs - stay calm, place the child on his or her side or abdomen with the face downward; do not force anything between the teeth and observe the child carefully. If the seizure does not stop after 10 minutes, the child should be brought to the nearest medical facility by car or ambulance.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Does my child need medication? No treatment is recommended for the vast majority of patients. There is no evidence that the currently available treatments used to prevent recurrences can prevent the subsequent development of epilepsy. Furthermore, these medicines have significant drawbacks.

What should I do to treat my child if he/she develops a fever? Vigorous control of fever with Tylenol or Motrin and sponging is advocated by most pediatricians but has not been proven to lower the risk of febrile seizures recurring. I advise Tylenol every 6 hours during a febrile illness because lowering the fever will usually make the child more comfortable.

Should my child have an EEG? Routine tests are not indicated. EEG does not help predict recurrences or risk for epilepsy.

What about immunizations? Immunizations should proceed as scheduled. Seizures following childhood immunizations are no different from other febrile seizures. The risk of acquiring a vaccine-preventable illness outweighs the risk of having a febrile seizure.

Are my other children at risk? Yes, they are slightly more likely than the rest of the population to develop febrile as well as afebrile seizures. The exact percentage is unknown, but the risk is very small.