

Newsletter: Winter 2010

Childhood Convulsions

with Geoff Bryant

In one of my First Aid classes recently, I had a lengthy discussion with a greatly concerned parent after her two year old had a 'Febrile Convulsion'. The parent was pretty concerned about how dangerous these seizures are, and what should be done about them. They really do look terrifying, so I felt it is a relevant topic for this newsletter.

Please feel free to pass this info along to anyone who may be interested.



What is it? A seizure... looks similar to epilepsy.

A childhood convulsion (also called a febrile convulsion) is one of the scariest things you will ever see as a parent or a carer. But the important thing is that the convulsion is **NOT DANGEROUS** (but the temperature, or the condition that caused it, might be).

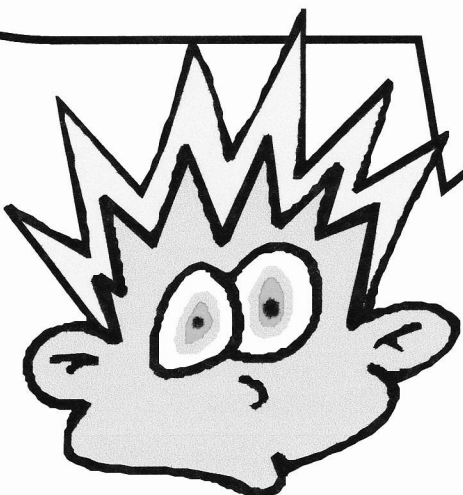
What causes them???

The seizure is brought on by a rapid change in temperature, NOT a high temp as most people believe. Huh? Well, lets imagine taking a cold glass out of the fridge, and putting it straight under the hot water tap. What would happen?...The glass would crack because the temperature change is too quick to handle. Well, in young children (usually under 6 years), sometimes the temp climbs too quickly, the body cannot cope, and that causes the seizure. So, why does the child get hot? Firstly, when we get sick, our temperature often rises. That slows us down (we often go to bed) so the body can fight the bug. Secondly, the higher temps's often kill the bug. But a young child sometimes doesn't have accurate control over the body's thermostat. If the child gets too hot, too quickly, something has to give...and they can have a seizure.

What do they look like?

SCARY!!!

Eyes rolled back or squinting, with arched spine or head thrown back, often with shaking and convulsing, and sometimes foaming at the mouth or moaning. Tightly clenched fists, often with flushed face and fever.



What do we do?

STAY CALM (yeah right!)

After the convulsion finishes, roll them on their side, strip off their clothing to let them air cool. **DO NOT SPONGE THEM DOWN** as cooling them down too quickly may cause another seizure.

Contact your doctor or ambulance for advice. Give medication only if told to do so by doctor or ambo.

REMEMBER: the convulsion is **NOT** dangerous, but the condition could be...always seek medical advice.

First Aid for Life