

Infantile Spasms and Down Syndrome

Knowing what to look for can be helpful in detecting infantile spasms as soon as possible. Infantile spasms are a type of seizure, and seizures occur in 8 to 10 percent of children with Down syndrome. The earlier infantile spasms are identified, the better your child's prognosis will be.

WHAT ARE INFANTILE SPASMS?

- Infantile spasms are a type of seizure that can happen in children with Down syndrome between the ages of 5 and 10 months.
- We recommend all parents watch the videos posted by the UK Infantile Spasm Trust and on the blog, Noah's Dad.
 - UK Infantile Spasm Trust:
<https://ukinfantilespasmtrust.org/>
 - Noah's Dad:
<https://noahsdad.com/infantile-spasms/>

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Spasms tend to occur in clusters, and several clusters can be seen in one day. Infantile spasms are most common after the infant wakes up in the morning or after a nap. Children can be seen bending over at the waist while having an infantile spasm, sometimes causing infantile spasms to be referred to as "jack-knife spasms."

Some signs include:

- A grimace on your child's face, sometimes lasting seconds, where they stop making noises.
- Arching of the back and/or stiffening of the arms and legs.
- Jerking body movement that involves the head, torso, arms and legs lasting 1 to 2 seconds.
- Loss of developmental milestones (eg, crawling, fine motor skills or verbalization).

HOW ARE INFANTILE SPASMS DIAGNOSED?

The diagnosis of infantile spasms is made by a neurologist. The neurologist listens closely to your story and examines your child. They will also perform an electroencephalogram (EEG). This measures the electrical activity of the brain. A certain brain wave called "hypsarrhythmia" may help diagnose infantile spasms.

TIPS FOR EASIER DIAGNOSIS

If you can, try to record on video any episodes of infantile spasms, and bring the recordings to your doctor's office. This will help your doctor to better diagnose your child.

HOW ARE INFANTILE SPASMS TREATED?

If you suspect that your child has infantile spasms, bring your child to a pediatric neurologist for urgent evaluation. There are many treatments available for infantile spasms. Some are more effective than others based on the specific cause of the seizures. The neurologist will tailor the treatment to your child. Some of the common treatments include medications and changes in diet.