

Information for patients and carers after a first suspected seizure



James Paget
University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Author: Rachael Rendell, Epilepsy Specialist Nurse (Adults)
Neurology Department

Introduction

An epileptic seizure is due to an interruption in the electrical activity of the brain that can cause a brief change in the way the brain works.

There are different sorts of seizures sometimes called “fits” or “convulsions”. Often the person becomes unconscious and is not able to respond. They may fall and there can be jerking or stiffening of the limbs. However there are also minor seizures where the person does not lose consciousness and may experience funny sensations, feelings, uncontrolled movement in one or more limbs, or any combination of these or other symptoms.

Epilepsy

Suffering a single seizure does not mean you have epilepsy – this may be the only seizure that you ever have. Not all blackouts/collapses are definite epileptic seizures, and may have different causes which will need further investigation.

Will it happen again?

We cannot predict when or if a seizure may occur, however we do know that certain things may trigger a seizure episode, such as: flashing lights, lack of sleep, excess alcohol, drugs and illness.

In the event of a further seizure, the people around you should:

- Stay calm
- Stay with you
- Loosen clothing around your neck
- Protect you from injury (remove sharp/hard objects from the area; or guide you to safety)
- Cushion your head
- Once the seizure has finished, put you on your side or in the recovery position to aid your breathing
- Stay with you and give reassurance until you are fully recovered.

They should not

- Try to restrain you
- Put anything in your mouth
- Try to move you if you are not in danger
- Give you anything to drink or eat until you are fully recovered.

When to dial 999 and call an ambulance

- If a seizure lasts for five minutes or more
- One seizure follows another without you regaining consciousness
- You are badly injured during a seizure or may have inhaled water e.g in the bath, swimming.

Lifestyle issues

It is important that you do not place yourself in danger by performing activities that could be hazardous if you were to have a seizure. Consider:

- Taking more care when cooking
- Take showers rather than baths
- Do not lock the bathroom door
- Do not go swimming where there is no lifeguard
- Do not undertake activities such as water sports, climbing, or where there is a significant injury if you were to fall
- Inform your employer, especially if you work with ladders or operate machinery
- If you have small children, for their safety, it is best to carry them in car seats up and down the stairs, and to have someone with you when you bathe them.

Can I drive?

NO, Seizures are unpredictable and it is against the law to drive in this instance. This is to ensure your safety and the safety of others. After a first suspected seizure you must not drive for six months, but if you continue to have seizures it can be one year.

Your car insurance will not be valid if you continue to drive. You are legally obliged to inform the DVLA and your insurance provider about your seizure[s]. During the time you are unable to drive you are entitled to a free bus pass, reduced train fare and may be entitled to financial assistance for travel to work, under the 'Access to Work Scheme'.

What happens now?

A request will be made for an outpatient appointment to see the Consultant Neurologist.

If possible please bring with you an eye witness account of your seizure[s], your medical history and a list of current medications you take.

If you have any concerns in the interim please contact your own GP or 111.

Further help and advice

Epilepsy Specialist Nurse, James Paget University Hospital 01493 453937

or

The Epilepsy Society www.epilepsysociety.org.uk Telephone 01494 601400

Epilepsy Action www.epilepsy.org.uk Telephone 0808 800 5050

Feedback

We want your visit to be as comfortable as possible. Please talk to the person in charge if you have any concerns. If the ward/department staff are unable to resolve your concern, please ask for our Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) information. Please be assured that raising a concern will not impact on your care. **Before you leave the hospital you will be asked to complete a Friends and Family Test feedback card.** Providing your feedback is vital in helping to transform NHS services and to support patient choice.

Trust Values

Courtesy and respect

- A welcoming and positive attitude
 - Polite, friendly and interested in people
 - Value and respect people as individuals
- So people feel **welcome**

Attentively kind and helpful

- Look out for dignity, privacy & humanity
 - Attentive, responsive & take time to help
 - Visible presence of staff to provide care
- So people feel **cared for**

Responsive communication

- Listen to people & answer their questions
 - Keep people clearly informed
 - Involve people
- So people feel **in control**

Effective and professional

- Safe, knowledgeable and reassuring
 - Effective care / services from joined up teams
 - Organised and timely, looking to improve
- So people feel **safe**



The hospital can arrange for an interpreter or person to sign to assist you in communicating effectively with staff during your stay. Please let us know.

For a large print version of this leaflet, contact PALS 01493 453240