

Neuro-Oncology Service

Brain Tumours and Seizures

Introduction

A brain tumour and surgery to the brain increases the risk of having a fit or seizure. This is also known as an epileptic attack. Patients and families need to be aware of this increased risk even though a fit may never happen.

What are fits or seizures?

A fit or seizure happens when the nerves in the brain have a temporary surge of abnormal activity. This may show itself in a number of ways:

- You may have a warning that something is about to happen such as a strange smell, taste or feeling.
- You may be aware of, or have abnormal movements of the muscles in your face, body or one or more of your arms and legs. **Many people having a fit do not experience a loss of consciousness.**
- Sometimes a brief episode of unexplainable behaviour occurs.
- When there is a loss of consciousness this might be complete, or you may seem to be awake but not aware of your surroundings, or you may not be your usual self for a short time.
- If loss of consciousness occurs, this may be accompanied by abnormal movements of arms and legs, laboured breathing and/or incontinence.
- Following the fit you may seem sleepy, muddled or less alert for some time. You may have a headache. You will need someone with you for safety until you are fully recovered.

Seizures usually stop within a short time and tend to be similar each time they happen. Seizures that last for more than a few minutes, or which repeatedly happen at very short intervals after each other may require **urgent treatment in hospital.**



Patient Information

Your doctor will need to be told if you start to have seizures or if you already have seizures if they increase in frequency or severity.

Treatment for seizures

Medications called anticonvulsants are used in controlling seizures. They may control them completely, or reduce their frequency and, or their severity. The type of medication used will depend on the type of seizure you have, and if they can be used with any other medications you are taking. Your consultant or G.P. will usually prescribe them, and review how effective they are. Occasionally where seizures are more difficult to control, the advice of a consultant who specialises in epilepsy may be sought.

It is important to be able to tell the doctor about what happens if you have a fit.

People with you at the time of a fit will be asked to describe what happened. For example, how long the fit lasted, if you lost consciousness, whether you reported altered sensations or feelings before the fit started. If you have never had a fit before, people who live with you are generally less worried if they are aware that there is a possibility that a fit may happen, and of what they can do to help.

Important - Please make those close to you aware of the following information:

What to do if someone has a seizure and loses consciousness:

- Stay calm and stop people crowding round
- Put something soft under the person's head to prevent injury
- Remove their glasses, if worn
- Only move them if you have to do so for their safety, such as if they are on a road or at risk from a fall down stairs
- Don't try to stop the limbs from shaking; let the fit take its course
- Do not try to put anything in the person's mouth (they will not swallow their tongue and you may break teeth or be bitten)

Patient Information

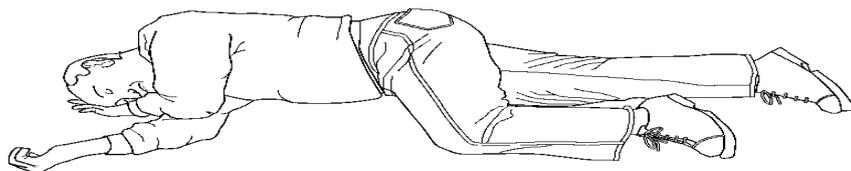
Afterwards:

- If possible roll the person onto their side, into the recovery position (see below)
- Wipe the mouth to clear saliva, and check they are able to breathe easily
- Remove any obstruction to the airway, e.g. food or dentures
- Minimise embarrassment, e.g. if the person has been incontinent deal with this as privately as possible
- Stay with them until they are fully recovered
- Only offer them a drink when they are fully recovered
- If you have any concerns call an ambulance

If someone has a fit where they do not lose consciousness:

- Remain with them
- Don't stop them from moving around unless they are in immediate danger
- Reassure them on recovery

Recovery Position



Afterwards:

You may feel that you would like to speak to someone if you or your friend or relative have had a fit. If so, please contact the Neuro-oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist using the details at the end of this leaflet.

Contact Numbers

Macmillan Neuro-Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialists

Tel: 024 7696 5326

Further information

Further information about Brain Tumours and Epilepsy is available from:

Arden Centre: 024 7696 7304/ 7272

The Macmillan Cancer Information Centre: 024 7696 6052

The centre offers free support, practical advice and information to anyone affected by cancer. No appointment is needed or you can telephone - an answering machine facility is available. Open Monday to Friday 9.00am to 4.00pm (not bank holidays); the centre is located on the ground floor in the main entrance.

Coventry Citizens Advice Bureau: 024 7625 2050

Coventry CAB offers advice on benefits and other related financial issues to cancer patients and their carers attending University Hospital irrespective of where they live. You will need to book an appointment on the number above to be seen by a member of staff.

Advice Bureaux may also be available where you live and this may be more convenient – ask in the Macmillan Cancer Information Centre for details of your nearest service.

National information sources:

If you cannot access the internet, please contact the Macmillan Cancer Information Centre or the Health Information Centre, where they will help you to obtain the relevant information.

Macmillan Cancer Support: 0808 808 00 00 / www.macmillan.org.uk

Lines open Monday to Friday 9.00am - 8.00pm

Brain Tumour Support: 0845 450 1039 / www.braintumoursupport.co.uk

Patient Information

The Brain Tumour Charity 0808 800 0004 /
www.thebraintumourcharity.org

Epilepsy Action: 0808 800 5050 / www.epilepsy.org.uk

This leaflet is based on information from University Hospital of Leicester with their kind permission.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact 024 7696 5330 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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