

Neuro-Oncology Service

Brain tumours and seizures

Having a brain tumour or brain surgery increases the risk of a fit or seizure, also known as an epileptic attack. Patients and their families should be aware of this risk, even though a fit may never happen.

What are fits or seizures?

A fit or seizure happens when the nerves in the brain suddenly become overactive for a short time. This can cause different symptoms, including:

- A warning sign, such as a strange smell, taste or feeling.
- Unusual movements in your face, body, arms or legs. **Some people stay fully active during a seizure.**
- A brief episode of unexplainable behaviour.
- Loss of consciousness, which may be complete, or you may appear awake but not aware of your surroundings or not act like your usual self for a short time.
- While unconscious, you may have jerking movements in your arms and legs, difficulty breathing or lose control of your bladder or bowels.
- After a seizure, you may feel sleepy, confused or less alert. You may also have a headache and need someone to stay with you until you fully recover.

Seizures usually last a short time and follow a similar pattern each time they happen. However, if a seizure lasts for more than a few minutes or happens repeatedly with little time in between, you may need **urgent treatment in hospital.**



Patient Information

Tell your doctor if you start having seizures or if they become more frequent or severe.

Treatment for seizures

Medications called anticonvulsants are used to control seizures. They may stop seizures completely or reduce how often they happen and how severe they are. The type of medication you need depends on the kind of seizures you have and if they can be taken safely with any other medications you use. Your consultant or GP will usually prescribe them and check how well they are working. If seizures are difficult to control, a specialist in epilepsy may be consulted.

It is important to tell your doctor what happens during a seizure. People who are with you at the time may be asked to describe what they saw, such as:

- How long the fit lasted
- If you lost consciousness
- Whether you noticed any unusual sensations or feelings before it started.

If you have never had a fit before, the people you live with may feel less worried if they know it could happen and understand what to do to help.

Important – Share this information with those close to you

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

- Stay calm and stop others from crowding around.
- Put something soft under their head to avoid injury.
- Remove their glasses if they are wearing them.
- Only move them if you have to do so for their safety, such as if they are on a road or near stairs.
- Do not try to hold them still. Let the fit take its course.

Patient Information

- Never put anything in their mouth. They won't swallow their tongue, but forcing something in could break their teeth or cause injury.

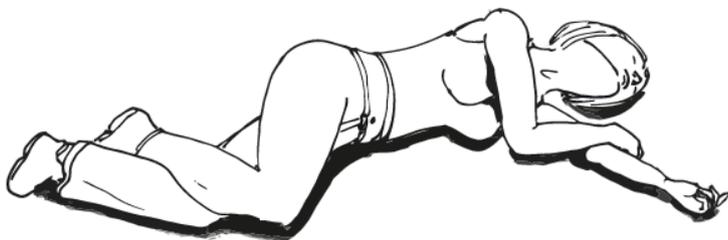
Afterwards:

- If possible, roll the person onto their side into the recovery position (see below).
- Wipe their mouth to clear any saliva and check that they are able to breathe easily.
- Remove any blockage in their airway, such as food or dentures.
- Be mindful of their privacy, especially if they have lost control of their bladder or bowels. Try to handle this as privately as possible.
- Stay with them until they are fully recovered.
- Only offer them a drink once they are fully recovered.
- If you have any concerns, call an ambulance.

If someone has a fit and does not lose consciousness:

- Stay with them.
- Don't try to stop them from moving unless they are in immediate danger.
- Reassure them once the fit is over.

Recovery Position



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Afterwards:

You may feel the need to talk to someone if you, or your friend or relative have had a fit. If so, please contact the Neuro-oncology Clinical Nurse Specialist.

Contact Numbers

Macmillan Neuro-Oncology Clinical Nurse Specialists

Tel: **024 7696 5326**

Further information

More 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 leave a message on the answering machine. The centre is open Monday to Friday, 9.00am to 4.00pm (closed on bank holidays), and is located on the ground floor near the main entrance.
- **Coventry Citizens Advice Bureau: 024 7625 2050**

Coventry CAB offers advice on benefits and financial issues for cancer patients and their carers attending University Hospital, regardless of where they live. You will need to book an appointment by calling the number above to speak with a member of staff.

Local Advice Bureaux may also be available in your area – ask at the Macmillan cancer information centre for details.

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 get the relevant information.

Patient 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
- **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.

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