

Suspected first seizure/fit

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio tape or computer disk, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please telephone the PALS desk on 01271 314090.

This leaflet has been given to you because you have had a suspected seizure or fit, and are now safe to go home with a responsible adult. We understand that this is an uncertain time and this leaflet aims to answer some of your questions.

You will receive an appointment to see a seizure specialist called a neurologist within the next two weeks to talk about what happened. If you have not heard about an appointment within two weeks or need to rearrange your appointment, please contact this number: **01271 311585**

It is very important you attend this clinic to help you get the right diagnosis and treatment. You may like to jot down some questions that you would like to ask to help you get the most out of your visit. There is space in this leaflet for notes.

What is a seizure/fit?

A seizure or fit occurs when there is abnormal electrical activity in the brain which causes a person to pass out and / or experience involuntary muscle spasms, called convulsions. This usually only lasts a few seconds or minutes.

Seizures are very common and approximately 8 – 10% of people will experience one in their lifetime. If you have had one seizure, there is a 40% chance you will have a second one and for most people this happens within a year of the first seizure.

What causes seizures?

There are many different causes for seizures and episodes which look like seizures – one of which is epilepsy.

At this stage we do not know the cause for your suspected seizure and you do not have a diagnosis of epilepsy. Your neurologist will talk things through with you and organise any extra tests needed to try to find out the cause.

What are the symptoms?

You are unlikely to be aware when you are about to have a seizure, although some people experience unusual sensations just before a seizure. These can include noticing an unusual smell or having a funny taste in your mouth.

After a seizure you may feel very tired and disorientated. Sometimes people can injure themselves during a seizure and you might notice bumps and bruises.

Are there any changes you need to make after a suspected seizure?

Try to avoid putting yourself in a situation where another seizure could be dangerous. Some examples of this are:

Driving – following a suspected seizure, you must **NOT** drive and you must inform the DVLA that you have had a seizure. You can be fined up to £1,000 if you don't tell DVLA about a medical condition that affects your driving and you may be prosecuted if you are involved in an accident as a result.

DVLA

Phone: 0300 790 6806 or

Online: www.gov.uk/contact-the-dvla/y/driving-and-medical-issues

Bathing – only have a bath or shower when someone is in the house and leave the door unlocked.

Leisure activities – avoid swimming and cycling. If you need to cycle, always make sure you wear your helmet.

Food and drink – it is best to avoid alcohol as this can make you more likely to have another seizure.

Travel – avoid standing close to the edge of the pavement or the platform when waiting for trains or trams.

Work – do not operate **heavy or dangerous** machinery, do not climb ladders or work at height.

Who should I tell?

We advise you share the first aid advice included at the back of this leaflet with people who are close to you.

What will happen in clinic?

As you are unlikely to remember much about what happened during your seizure, it can be really helpful for your neurologist to talk to a family member or friend who witnessed it. If they are unable to attend the appointment, ask them if they can make some notes about what they saw using the pointers below.

- What you were doing immediately before the episode
- The length of time you were unconscious
- If you had any shaking of your limbs
- If you changed colour or went blue at any stage
- How long it took you to wake up

- What were you like immediately after coming round e.g. confused, back to normal straight away

You will already have had some blood tests and an ECG (heart tracing) done before you went home, which will have been checked by an experienced doctor. We will have let you know if anything was abnormal or required further action before you left.

If you haven't had a scan of your head, don't worry. Not everyone needs a head scan to investigate their suspected seizure. There are different types of scan and if you need one, the neurologist will organise the most appropriate one for you.

Medication

Remember to take a list of all your current medications with you to every appointment, including any medicines you have purchased yourself.

Follow up

After you have been seen in the neurology clinic, we will arrange any necessary tests for you, and the neurologist will talk to you about the possible causes of your seizure.

References

<https://patient.info/doctor/first-seizure>

First aid for suspected seizures

Most seizures are short lived and stop on their own.

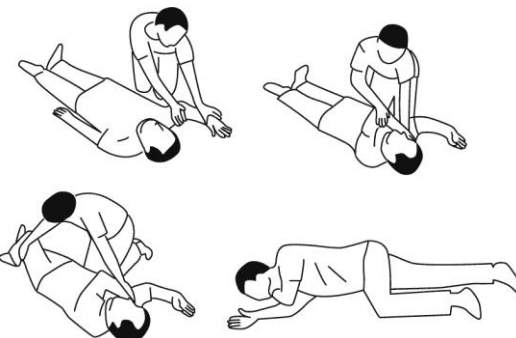
It is important you show this leaflet to the person staying with you so they can help you stay safe if you were to have another seizure, by following **ACT NOW**.

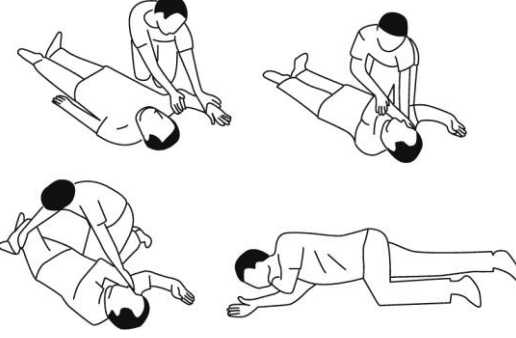
They should: RING 999

- Assess** Assess the situation – are you in danger of injuring yourself? Remove any nearby hot, sharp or hard objects that could cause injury.
- Cushion** Cushion your head (with a jumper, for example) to protect you from head injury, without covering your face or bending your neck.
- Time** Time the length of the seizure.
- Never** Never try to restrain you. Never put anything in your mouth. Never give you food or drink during a seizure.
- Over** Put you on your side (in the recovery position) once the seizure is over and stay with you until you come round.
- What** Make a note of what happened to you just before, during and after the seizure.

First aid advice cards

Please cut out this card and keep it with you at all times. It may be useful to tell those you are close to where you keep this card. You may also like to give a card to somebody who is close to you.

<p>First aid advice card Seek help – ring 999</p> <p>I have had a seizure/fit and am awaiting assessment. If I have another seizure, help me by acting now!</p> <p>Assess – am I in a safe place? Cushion – protect my head but don't bend my neck or cover my face Time – how long does my seizure/fit last? Never restrain me or put anything in my mouth Over – stay with me and stay calm What – make a note of what happened</p>	<p>First aid advice card Seek help – ring 999</p> <p><u>Recovery position for when the fit is over</u></p> 
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PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or e-mail ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple. Alternatively, it may be possible for us to arrange an appointment in your area.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of the staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust
Raleigh Park, Barnstaple
Devon EX31 4JB
Tel. 01271 322577
www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk

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