

- Witnessing a seizure is often a very frightening experience. People often think that the child is going to die, but this is not the case.
- Leave a message for the Epilepsy Nurse Specialist on the number at the front of this leaflet. She will then call you back when convenient

### Is it necessary for my child to have regular medication?

Regular treatment is rarely used after a first seizure. If however your child's consultant thinks regular treatment is required then they will explain the reasons why and tell you about the treatment that they recommend

As with any information leaflet we are only able to include general information. This leaflet is to be supplemented with advice and support from the nurses and doctors who are looking after your child. Therefore if you have any questions about the information in this advice sheet and/or any concerns about your child's condition please do not hesitate to ask.

If your child has been an inpatient with this seizure, they have 24 hours open access to the ward after discharge. So if your child's condition deteriorates over the next 24 hours, you can contact the ward directly for advice.

The nurse may advise you of what to do over the 'phone or she may explain that you need to return to the children's ward.

Further information on seizures can be found on the following web sites:-

<http://www.epilepsy.org.uk>

<http://www.epilepsynse.org.uk>

### How to comment on your treatment

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer your questions. However, if you have any concerns you can also contact the Patient Experience Service on 0800 917 6039 or E-mail [portsmouthhospitals.patientexperience@porthosp.nhs.uk](mailto:portsmouthhospitals.patientexperience@porthosp.nhs.uk)

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## Information for Families of Children and Young People following their first seizure

(without a temperature)

### Portsmouth Epilepsy Service for Children

If you need any further information contact Liz Nelson, Paediatric Epilepsy Nurse Specialist on 023 9228 6156



The Paediatric Unit  
Queen Alexandra Hospital, Cosham  
Tel: (023) 9228 3344

### Specialist Support

If you require this leaflet in another language, large print or another format, please contact the Health Information Centre Tel: (023) 9228 6757, who will advise you.

### **What is a seizure?**

The words seizure, convulsion and fit all mean the same thing. A seizure happens when the brain's electrical rhythm goes wrong. The classical description of someone going stiff, falling to the ground and jerking is not true of all children who have a seizure.

### **Are there different types of seizures?**

Yes. Seizures can take many forms, since the brain is responsible for such a wide range of functions. Personality, sensations, consciousness or movements of the body can all be temporarily disturbed during the seizure. In simple terms a seizure can be generalised (involving the whole brain) or focal (involving only part of the brain).

**Generalised seizures** are of several types. The commonest are:

- Tonic clonic seizures - the child is unconscious and their whole body jerks uncontrollably.
- Absence seizures - the child stares, does not respond to voice or touch for a few seconds but usually does not fall or jerk.
- Myoclonic jerks - single jerk of the whole body, which may cause a fall

**Focal seizures** are where only one part of the body shakes or simply feels strange. The child may seem "not with it".

One particular type of seizure is a febrile convulsion. This occurs in young children who have a high fever. These are dealt with in a separate information leaflet.

### **What causes a seizure?**

There are many things that can cause a seizure such as a low blood sugar, infection or a blow to the head. Looking at flashing lights, for example on a television screen, can trigger some seizures (although this is unusual). Sometimes we cannot find a cause.

### **Will it happen again?**

Not necessarily. Seizures can occur in as many as 1 out of 100 children, but many children who experience one seizure may never have a second one. Studies in children have shown that 4 out of 10 children who have a first seizure will go on to have a second seizure.

Do tell your child's school that they have had a seizure.

### **Does this mean my child has epilepsy?**

No. Epilepsy is a condition in which a child has 2 or more seizures without a particular cause. A child who has had only one seizure is not diagnosed as having epilepsy. Even if your child does have further fits, and is diagnosed as having epilepsy, they may grow out of it as they get older

### **Sensible precautions**

It is important to let your child take part in all their normal activities but extra supervision may be needed for a while.

Think about the implications if your child was to have a seizure in different circumstances. Would it put your child or others at risk eg whilst bathing, swimming, crossing the road?

### **What can I do if it happens again?**

There are some simple things that you can do if your child is having a fit.

- Stay calm.
- Only move the child if they are in a dangerous place (i.e. at the top of stairs or in the road). Move any objects out of the way to prevent harm.
- Take a note of the time; write it down if you can without leaving your child.
- Put something soft under your child's head (like a coat or jumper) to prevent injury.
- Lay your child on their side with the head at the same level, or slightly lower than their body (the recovery position)
- Do not restrain your child
- Do not put anything in your child's mouth.
- Do not slap or shake your child; just wait for the seizure to stop on its own. Most seizures last for less than 2 minutes. If a seizure lasts for more than 5 minutes, call an ambulance to take your child to hospital so that medication can be given if necessary.
- Do not give your child anything to eat or drink until they are fully recovered.
- If your child sees a doctor it is very helpful if someone who has witnessed the seizure is there. A description of the seizure is important when diagnosis is considered. It may be helpful to write down events at the time to help you remember.