

Advice for carers of children who have suffered a first seizure (without a fever)

What is a seizure?

Watching your child having a seizure can be a frightening experience, however children rarely suffer long-term harm. The words seizure, fit and convulsion all mean the same thing. A seizure occurs when there is a disturbance in the electrical activity of the brain that causes messages to become mixed up.

There are different types of seizure, but often children become unconscious and have jerking of their arms and legs. Carers may notice a change in colour or breathing pattern. Children may also bite their tongue or wet themselves. After a seizure, children are often drowsy and disorientated for a time.

What causes a seizure?

It is not always clear what has caused a seizure. Most of the time the cause is unknown, but the tendency to having a seizure may be inherited. They can occur in as many as 1 out of 100 children and for many children that will be the only time it happens. Following one seizure without a temperature, over half of children do not have a further episode.

If your child does go on to have a 2nd seizure, then the likelihood of further seizure is increased. This is the time when investigations and treatment may be required. We diagnose epilepsy when children have two or more seizures without an obvious cause. If a diagnosis of epilepsy is made, it does not mean that this will be a lifelong condition. Around 3 out of 4 children with epilepsy will grow out of the condition.

What should I do if my child has another seizure?

Do:

- Assess the situation
- Note the time – how long did it last?
- Move objects that may cause injury
- Put something soft under their head
- Turn on side as soon as possible, into the recovery position (see next page)
- Stay with your child
- If you get the opportunity, a video on a smartphone can help the medical teams later.

Do Not:

- Move your child unless they are in danger
- Restrict movements
- Place anything in their mouth
- Give anything to eat or drink until fully recovered

Call an ambulance (999) if:

- You are frightened or need help
- The seizure continues for more than 5 minutes
- One seizure follows another
- Your child is injured, or you are concerned about their breathing
- You believe they need medical attention

General safety advice

It is a really good idea to let school / nursery and the parents of friends know that your child has suffered a first seizure.

- **Bathing** – Supervise children in the bath. Encourage older children to take showers and leave the door unlocked.
- **Swimming** – Inform the pool attendant and don't allow children to swim unaccompanied.
- **Cycling** – Make sure your child wears a helmet. Encourage them to cycle with a friend.
- **Climbing** – Children should not climb anything taller than their own height unless they have a rope and harness.
- **Sleeping** – Consider moving the bed away from radiators and walls to prevent injury.
- **Driving** – If your teenager has had a seizure they must not drive and must inform the DVLA.

Recovery position



2 of 3

