

Patient information

Advice following a first suspected seizure

What is a seizure?

A seizure occurs when there is an abnormal discharge of electrical activity in the brain. This can cause a person to black out, and their limbs may jerk or shake. Sometimes people bite their tongue or may pass urine. They can appear confused when they come round and may feel worn out. In some cases people suffer from a form of seizure where they appear to go 'vacant' for a period of time.

It is natural to feel frightened by such an experience. A seizure occurring for the first time does not mean a diagnosis of epilepsy. It is important to undergo further investigations to try and find out the cause of the seizure. An appointment will be made for you to see a Neurology Consultant as an outpatient.

One single seizure does not mean you have Epilepsy.

Will it happen again?

We cannot predict when or if a seizure may occur, however we do know that certain things may trigger a seizure episode, such as: flashing lights, lack of sleep, excess alcohol, drugs illness.

Can I drive?

NO Seizures are unpredictable and it is against the law to drive in this instance. This is to ensure your safety and the safety of others. After a first suspected seizure you must not drive for 6 months, but if you continue to have seizures it can be a year.

Your car insurance will not be valid if you continue to drive. You are legally obliged to inform the DVLA and your insurance provider about your seizure/s.

During the time you are unable to drive you are entitled to a free bus pass, reduced train fare and may be entitled to financial assistance for travel to work, under the 'Access to Work Scheme'.

Lifestyle issues

It is important that you do not place yourself in danger by performing activities that could be hazardous if you were to have a seizure. Consider:

- Taking more care when cooking.
- Take showers rather than baths.
- Do not lock the bathroom door.
- Do not go swimming where there is no lifeguard.
- Do not undertake activities such as water sports, climbing, or where there is a significant injury if you were to fall.
- Inform your employer, especially if you work with ladders or operate machinery.
- If you have small children, for their safety, it is best to carry them in car seats up and down the stairs, and to have someone with you when you bathe them.

In the event of a further seizure, the people around you should:

- Stay calm.
- Stay with you.
- Loosen clothing around your neck.
- Protect you from injury (remove sharp/hard objects from the area; or guide you to safety).
- Cushion your head.
- Once the seizure has finished, put you on your side or in the recovery position to aid your breathing.
- Stay with you and give reassurance until you are fully recovered.

They should not

- Try to restrain you.

- Put anything in your mouth.
- Try to move you if you are not in danger.
- Give you anything to drink or eat until you are fully recovered.

When to dial 999 and call an ambulance

- If a seizure lasts for five minutes or more.
- One seizure follows another without you regaining consciousness.
- You are badly injured during a seizure or may have inhaled water eg in the bath, swimming.

What happens now?

A request will be made for an outpatient appointment to see the Consultant Neurologist.

If possible please bring with you an eye witness account of your seizure/s, your medical history and a list of current medications you take.

If you have any concerns in the interim contact your own GP or the Epilepsy Specialist Nurse for the West Suffolk Hospital.

Further help and advice

Epilepsy Specialist Nurse for West Suffolk Telephone 01284 713718

The Epilepsy Society www.epilepsysociety.org.uk Telephone 01494 601400

Epilepsy Action www.epilepsy.org.uk Telephone 0808 800 5050

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the disabledgo website link below:

<http://www.disabledgo.com/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust/main>