

Seizures

Patient and Family Education



This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

What is a seizure?

A seizure is caused by an abnormal discharge of electrical activity in the brain. Seizures can be associated with many medical conditions. They may cause one or more of the following symptoms:

- Falling
- Uncontrollable or involuntary muscle spasms
- Drooling from the mouth
- Loss of bladder or bowel control
- Altered awareness

What do I do if my child has a seizure?

If your child has a seizure:

- Keep calm, and stay with him.
- Move him to a flat surface, and put something soft under his head.
- Remove all hot or sharp objects from the area.
- Loosen tight clothing—especially around his neck.
- Turn him on his side so he does not choke on his saliva or vomit.
- Do not put anything in his mouth. He will not choke on his tongue.
- Do not try to restrain him during a seizure.
- After the seizure, your child may fall asleep. This is called the postictal (post-IC-tal) phase. Do not attempt to give him food or drink until he is awake and alert.
- Call his doctor if:
 - He has a different type of seizure than usual.
 - He has more seizures than usual.
 - He does not return to his normal behavior within 30 minutes.

Call 911 right away if your child stops breathing or turns blue.

If a seizure lasts more than 5 minutes, call 911 or your local ambulance service (or follow your child's doctor's instructions). Ask his doctor if any medicine is needed for emergency use.

What should I look for and remember?

Watch and record all seizure activity in a seizure diary. Take the seizure diary with you when your child goes to the doctor.

Watch and record these things:

- How long was the seizure? Look at a clock when the seizure starts and again when it is over.
- What happened during the seizure? What body parts were involved? Where did it start and how did it progress?
- What happened before the seizure, such as a behavior change, crying, repeated movements or confusion?
- Did your child's color or breathing change? If your child seems to stop breathing, how long did this last?

What should I know about my child's medicines?

- Seizures can be controlled—not cured—by medicine.
- Do not let your child stop taking medicine for seizures without asking the doctor first.
- Ask your child's doctor what side effects from your child's medicine to look for and what to do about them.
- Your child's doctor may want to have your child's blood tested now and then to check medicine levels. Keep all of your child's appointments.
- Some medicines do not mix well with others. Tell your child's doctor all the medicines he takes. Ask which medicines should be avoided.

What should I know about my child's activities?

- Talk about your child's activities with his doctor. What your child is allowed or not allowed to do depends on:
 - The type of seizures he has.
 - How often and how severe the seizures are.
 - How he responds to medicine or therapy.
 - The length of time his seizures have been controlled.
- Allow your child to take part in normal activities as much as possible.
- Teach his teachers, camp counselors, coaches and any caretakers about how to care for him in case of a seizure.
- Have your child wear appropriate safety devices, such as helmets to help prevent head injuries, as advised.
- Avoid activities that involve heights.
- Your child should never bike or swim without supervision, even if your doctor approves the activity.
- Watch young children at all times while in a bathtub. Showers are recommended for older children.
- Check with your child's doctor before your child begins driving when he is old enough.