

Symptom Management

Seizures

A seizure leads to uncontrolled actions and loss of consciousness. Seizures themselves do no harm to the brain unless they go on for hours. As your child's illness progresses he may have his first seizure or have more seizures.

The risk of seizures increases when the child:

- * has more pressure in the brain often from fluid building up or a growing tumour;
- * has a high fever that cannot be controlled;
- * is not taking enough anti-seizure medication;
- * has physical stress that the weakened body cannot handle e.g. fatigue or imbalance of body hormones and salts;
- * has a worsening of the condition that causes the seizures.

Watch for these signs of a seizure

- * blank stares;
- * sudden blueness around the mouth;
- * twitches from any body part (eye, hand, tongue, foot);
- * large jerky movements of the head, arm and legs;
- * suggestions of strange feelings/sounds/sights. This is called an "aura." Some children have this before the seizure.

Preventing seizures

- * **Give your child prescribed seizure control medications on time**
Ask your neurologist to review the dose and type of drug if seizures are happening more and more often or changing in other ways. If seizures are new for your child, discuss seizure control medication with your doctor.
- * **Treat fevers quickly** (see the handout on [Fever / infection](#)).
- * **Avoid your child's known triggers (e.g., fatigue, heat, bright / flickering lights)**
Write your child's triggers here and let her other caregivers know about them.
 - ◆ _____
 - ◆ _____
 - ◆ _____

A seizure is like an "electrical storm" in the brain.

Some seizures cannot be prevented

Managing seizures

- * **Keep your child safe during a seizure**
 - ◆ Lay him down to protect him from falling or being injured.
 - ◆ Turn his head to the side to keep the airway open.
 - ◆ Do not put anything in the mouth or between the teeth.
 - ◆ Stay with him
 - ◆ If your child has many seizures, pad his bed with pillows or blankets.

- * **Have a plan in place for how to manage a seizure**
 - ◆ Discuss the plan with the health professional and write it out.
 - ◆ Be sure you know how and when to give the emergency medication if a seizure goes on beyond a few minutes (specify time in your plan).

- * **Reassure your child once the seizure is over**
 - ◆ If seizures are new for your child, explain what is happening.
 - ◆ Seizures leave the child feeling drowsy and a little muddled. Allow him to rest.
 - ◆ Some children lose bladder control during or right after a seizure.
 - ◆ Be matter of fact about changing clothes and cleaning up. This can be very difficult for older children. You can protect the bed with a plastic sheet if seizures happen often in bed.

Getting professional help when appropriate

Call your doctor or nurse during the day if your child:

- * has a seizure and you have no plan in place
- * has so many seizures that they are interfering with activities

If you have not already decided on a plan, call your doctor or nurse as soon as you can if your child:

- * has a seizure that continues for more than a minute (call 911 first)

When you call, give your child's name, age, and diagnosis. Be ready with this information:

1. Does your child have a temperature? (Explain if taking a temperature is no longer part of your plan.)
2. What drugs/therapies has your child had?
3. In what way is this seizure unusual for your child?
4. About how long did it last?
5. What did it look like?

End note:

Seizures are most alarming for the onlookers. If brothers and sisters are present while a seizure is happening, be sure to take time to talk to them about what they have seen. Be sure to say that a seizure does not hurt and always passes over. You can use the image of a storm in the body to help a young child understand.

The plan to manage seizures:

Explain seizures to siblings in words they can understand.

This pamphlet is the result of a collaboration between

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