

First Unexplained Fit (Seizure, Faint, Blackout)

Many people have a single isolated fit (seizure) at some point in their life. If you have a single fit (seizure) or unexplained loss of consciousness, it does not necessarily mean that you have epilepsy.

Other attacks such as faints can look similar to a fit (seizure). It is important to get as much information as possible about what happened to you as this can help the doctor reach a diagnosis. If you did attend the Emergency Department following your attack, some tests may have been done and you will have been referred to a hospital specialist (Neurologist).

If you went to see your GP afterwards, instead of attending the Emergency Department, your GP will refer you to a hospital specialist. It is important that you bring someone who saw the attack to the appointment with the hospital specialist. If you have had more than one fit, a diagnosis of epilepsy may be considered.

Description of what happened

When trying to work out why someone has had a fit, faint or seizure, it is useful for the doctors to have a description from someone who saw what happened. If there was a witness, please bring them with you to the appointment so the doctor can ask them questions. The doctor is likely to be interested in the following:

- What was the person doing before the episode started?
- Was there any mood change, for example, excitement, anxiety, anger?
- Did they mention any unusual feelings?
- What made you notice something was happening?
- Did they lose consciousness, were their eyes open or closed?
- Did their colour change? If so, where?



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- Did their breathing alter? Frothing from mouth?
- Were there any movements in their body or limbs?
- Did they bite their tongue? Blood in mouth?
- Were they incontinent (wet themselves)?
- How long did the episode last?
- How were they afterwards? Were they confused?
- How long was it before they could go back to their normal activities?

It is useful to keep a record of the episodes that occur including dates and times.

We are not suggesting you have been diagnosed with epilepsy.

Safety Issues

It is important that family and friends feel confident about what to do if you should suffer another attack.

DO

- Keep calm (usually these events are self-limiting);
- Check the time, to monitor how long the seizure lasts;
- Prevent others from crowding around;
- Loosen any tight clothing around the neck;
- Protect the person from injury (that is, remove sharp or hard objects from the area) and if they are confused, guide them away from dangers such as stairs or the road;
- Place a coat or pillow under their head if they have fallen;
- Once the episode has finished, aid breathing by placing the person on their side (recovery position);
- Stay with the person until they have fully recovered and are aware of their surroundings;
- Gently reassure them as they recover.



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DON'T

- Try to restrain the person or their movements;
- Put anything in the persons mouth;
- Try to move the person unless they are in danger;
- Give them anything to drink until they are fully recovered.

Call an Ambulance If:

- The attack lasts for more than 5 minutes;
- One fit (seizure) follows another without the person regaining consciousness in between;
- The person has injured themselves during a seizure or is having difficulty breathing.

Specific Issues

Driving: If you have suffered a fit or a sudden unexplained loss of consciousness that occurred without warning **YOU MUST STOP DRIVING AND INFORM THE DVLA.** They will make a decision about whether or not you can continue to drive once they have the necessary information.

It is your responsibility and legal obligation to do this.
DVLA Drivers Medical Group, Swansea, SA99 1DL

If driving is essential for your current employment it may be helpful to contact the specialist advisers (Jobcentre Plus) who may be able to offer some assistance.

Please retain this leaflet for future reference.



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For further advice or information you can telephone your local Minor Injury Unit (MIU):

Chippenham Community Hospital

Rowden Hill

Chippenham

SN15 2AJ

Tel: 01249 456 403/4

Open: 07:00 to 23:00; seven days a week

Trowbridge Community Hospital

Adcroft Street

Trowbridge

BA14 8PH

Tel: 01225 711 329

Open: 07:00 to 23:00; seven days a week

Smoking will not be permitted on any NHS site in England. Smoking will not be permitted within any of our buildings or anywhere outside on our sites. Smoking facilities will not be provided. Please be considerate of others when vaping in hospital grounds.

This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email gwh.pals@nhs.net

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