



# 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 these 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 longer than 5 minutes, call 911 (or follow your child's doctor's instructions). Ask his doctor if your child needs any medicine for emergency use.

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**

# **Seizures, continued**

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## **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 seemed to stop breathing, how long did it last?

## **What should I know about my child's medicines?**

- Seizures can be controlled but 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 at times 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.

**In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.**