

Fits and seizures may involve violent twitching of arms and legs or stiffness of the whole body followed by jerking limb movements, clenched fists and an arched back. A person having a fit or seizure may lose consciousness. It can be very frightening to see but is often not very serious.



Causes of fits and seizures

Several conditions can cause fits - febrile convulsions are caused when a person's temperature gets too high, whilst other causes can include head injuries or even epilepsy. If a fit or seizure happens more than once you should make an appointment to see your GP to consider investigations (if possible it is useful to take a fresh specimen of urine with you in a clean container so that it can be tested).

Signs of a fit

Not all fits cause movement of the body or unconsciousness. Certain types of epilepsy can cause the person to go limp all over or just look blank. The person may become dazed or confused before losing consciousness. Their eyes may roll backwards; they might cry out, get muscle spasms or twitches or stop breathing briefly. Bladder and bowel control may be lost.

What to do when you see someone having a fit

- Move them away from anything that could cause injury, like a busy road or hot cooker
- Cushion their head if they're on the ground
- Loosen any tight clothing around their neck, like a collar or tie, to aid breathing

- When their convulsions stop, turn them so that they're lying on their side
- Stay with them and talk to them calmly until they have recovered
- Note the time the seizure starts and finishes
- Don't put anything in the person's mouth, including your fingers. They may bite their tongue, but this will heal. Putting an object in their mouth could cause more damage. They will not swallow their tongue.
- As the person is coming round, they may be confused so try to comfort them.

Do you need to call an ambulance?

You don't necessarily have to call an ambulance because people with epilepsy don't need to go to hospital every time they have a seizure. Some people with epilepsy wear a special bracelet or carry a card to let medical professionals and anyone witnessing a seizure know that they have epilepsy. If they know they have epilepsy, they might just prefer to get on with their day.



For more information, help and support go to www.choosewellmanchester.org.uk or visit NHS Choices at www.nhs.uk

Choose the right care

What to do next...



Choose care at home if...

- The fit or seizure may just have been fainting
The person should rest and ensure they take plenty of (non-alcoholic) liquids over the next 24-48 hours
- The person is known to have seizures and this one is normal for them



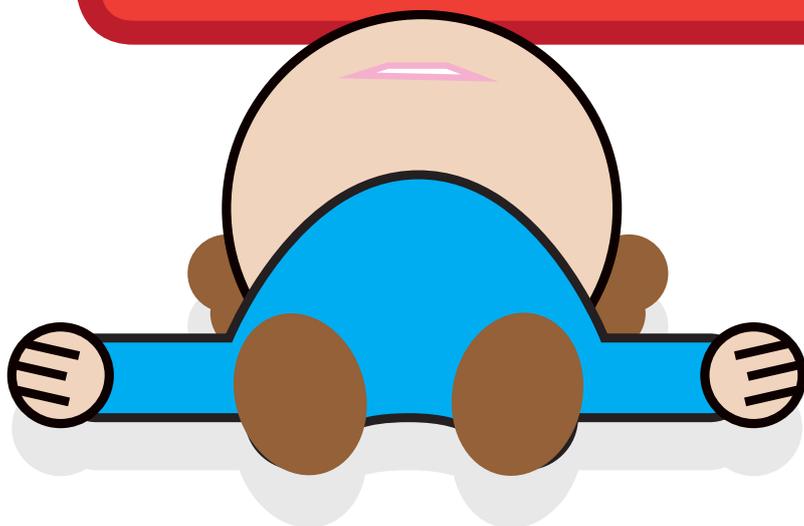
Choose your GP surgery if...

- If a person has a fit lasting more than five minutes
- Has more than one fit in an hour - they will require urgent medical attention
- Any weakness of arms or legs
- Speech becomes slurred
- Develops a headache
- Becomes short of breath



Call 999 A&E if...

- A person is currently having a seizure or fit that has lasted for more than five minutes
- If they are known to have seizures and this seizure seems different to usual
- It's the first time someone has had a seizure
- The person has had a head injury in the last 24 hours
- The person doesn't regain full consciousness or has a series of seizures without regaining consciousness



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