Seizures due to brain and spinal cord tumours

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A tumour may cause seizures which are disruptions to the normal patterns of electrical impulses in the brain. Seizures are sometimes called fits or convulsions. They can often be prevented with anti-convulsant medication (also called anti-epileptic or anti-seizure medication).

Generalised seizures

These types of seizure typically affect the whole body. The most common type is called a tonic-clonic seizure (previously known as a grand mal seizure). A seizure often starts with a sudden cry, followed by the person falling down and losing consciousness. The person's muscles may twitch violently and their breath may be shallow for up to two minutes.

Partial seizures

Partial seizures affect one part of the body, such as an arm or a leg. Symptoms include:

- twitching
- jerking
- tingling or numbness
- altered sensations (hallucinations), such as changed vision or hearing, sensing strange tastes or smells
- a feeling of déjà vu.

Partial seizures may cause a brief loss of consciousness.

After a seizure, a person may be confused and is often very tired. It is important that they are able to rest.

Anti-convulsant medications

There are many types of anti-convulsant drugs used to prevent seizures. You may have blood- and liver-function tests while you are taking them. This is to check whether the dose is effective and how your liver is coping with the medication. See your doctor for more information.

First aid tips to help someone having a seizure

- Remain calm and stay with the person, but do not restrain them or put anything in their mouth.
- Time the seizure.
- Protect the person from injury (e.g. by moving hazards or placing a soft pillow under their head and shoulders).
- Lie the person on their side as soon as possible, or right away if they have vomited. This is important if they are unconscious or have food or fluid in their mouth.
- Call an ambulance (000) if the seizure lasts more than five minutes, if multiple seizures occur or if anyone is injured.

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