After a suspected seizure

Information for patients, relatives and carers
This booklet has been provided to help answer some of the questions you may have about your suspected seizure.

**What happened to me?**
We have given you this booklet because you have had a suspected seizure. There can be lots of different medical causes for a seizure.

5% of people will experience an epileptic seizure on their lifetime. However, this does not mean that you have epilepsy. A diagnosis of epilepsy will generally be made after two or more seizures, on separate occasions. There are more than 40 different types of seizure and not everybody loses consciousness.

**What caused it?**
A seizure can be caused by stress, exhaustion, a bang to the head, pain, overuse of alcohol, drug use or illness. Often the cause is never found and 50% of people will never have another seizure.

**Will I need treatment?**
Possibly. Often after a first seizure, no treatment is needed. We may send you home and advise you to see your GP, or in an emergency, return to your nearest accident and emergency department if it happens again.

If the doctors feel that your seizure needs further investigation, we will refer you to the neurology service’s **first seizure clinic**.
What happens at the first seizure clinic?
The doctor will ask questions about what happened during your seizure. If someone was with you for all or part of your suspected seizure, it would be extremely helpful if you brought them with you to your clinic appointment.

The doctor is likely to ask the following questions:

- What were you doing before the seizure started?
- Was there a change in mood – did you become excited, anxious or angry?
- If there was someone with you, did you mention any unusual feelings to them?
- What made the person who was with you notice that something was happening?
- Did you lose consciousness or were you confused?
- Did your colour change? If so, where?
- Was your breathing different to normal?
- Was there any movement in your body or limbs?
- Did you bite your tongue?
- Did you wet yourself?
- How long did the seizure last?
- How were you afterwards?
- How long was it before you could go back to your normal activities?

It is helpful if you can keep a record of dates and times that seizures occur.
Can I still drive?
No. Anyone who has experienced an unexplained loss of consciousness should not drive. Please contact the DVLA for advice (see below), although you may want to postpone this until after your clinic appointment so that you can give them more information. You may be eligible for a free bus pass or railcard if you are unable to drive for medical reasons.

DVLA
Telephone: 0870 600 0301
Web: www.dvla.gov.uk

Drivers medical group
Swansea
SA99 1DL

What should I tell my boss?
It is sensible to tell your line manager or occupational health department (if your company has one) to gain support and reassurance from your colleagues and your employer.

You have to inform them if your job involves driving (any vehicle); flying; if you are in the armed forces, police, fire service or merchant navy; if you or anyone else could be at risk if it happens again, for example if you work at heights, near water, with heat sources, with machinery or with children or vulnerable adults.
What can I do to help myself?
We advise you not to smoke, to eat a healthy diet, to take exercise, avoid excessive stress and tiredness, and to limit the amount of alcohol you drink.

If we have told you what caused the first seizure, then you should avoid or minimise the trigger where possible.

Remember – for 50% of people this will be a single event, which will never happen again.

How do I keep myself safe?
Use your common sense and remember that it may never happen again.

- Avoid any triggers you may have identified
- Choose a healthy lifestyle
- Do not smoke inside the house
- Do not iron in a room on your own
- It is safer if you take a shower rather than have a bath
- A microwave is less risky to use than a cooker
- Let people know where you are and when you expect to return
- If you go swimming, tell the pool attendant that you have previously had a seizure
- Avoid activities where it would be difficult to get help to you, such as scuba diving or lone activities
- Avoid unprotected heights and unsupervised areas of water.
Will it happen again?
Possibly. For most people, if you are going to have another seizure, it will occur within the next six months.

You or your family may be worried it will happen again. It is always a good idea to know what to do if you do have another seizure. It is up to you who you tell, but you may like to show the following section to family, friends and colleagues so they know how to help you if it does happen again.

First aid advice if someone has a seizure

**DO:**
- Keep calm
- Check the time, to monitor how long the seizure lasts
- Prevent other people from crowding around
- Loosen any tight clothing from around the neck
- Protect the person from injury by removing sharp or hard objects from the area. If they are confuse, guide them away from danger such as stairs or the road
- If they have fallen onto the floor, place a coat/ pillow under their head
- Once the seizure has finished, aid their breathing by placing the person on their side. Gently lift their chin, tilting their head backwards. This is the recovery position (see below)
Stay with them until they are fully recovered and aware of their surroundings
Gently reassure them as they recover.

DO NOT:
- Try to restrain the person or their movements
- Put anything between their teeth
- Try to move them unless they are in danger
- Give the person anything to drink until they are fully recovered.

When should an ambulance be called?
- If a convulsive (shaking) seizure lasts more than five minutes
- If one convulsive seizure follows another without the person regaining consciousness in between
- If the person had injured themselves during a seizure or is having problems breathing.

What should I do now?
It is common to feel nervous and anxious about returning to normal activities but your confidence will return the more that you do. Follow any advice we have given you about lifestyle and general safety, but try not to let your seizure restrict your activities.

Many people will never have another seizure, but if you do, contact your GP as soon as possible for further investigations.