

# After a seizure

This factsheet provides information on some of the more common and lesser known experiences after a seizure.

## *Common experiences after a seizure*

Every person's recovery from a seizure is different and will also depend on the type of seizure experienced. While many people come round from a seizure fairly quickly and become aware of their surroundings, full recovery can take some time. Even if the person has not sustained an injury, it can take several hours, sometimes several days, before a person feels back to normal again.

### *Post-ictal phase*

The medical term for the time immediately after a seizure is called the **post-ictal phase**. Common symptoms during the post-ictal phase include confusion, tiredness, headaches, slurred speech, feeling sick, or mood changes. People often want to sleep or be in a quiet place.

Speaking gently to a person after a seizure and explaining what has happened while they are still confused will provide reassurance and can help reorientate the person.

Periods of confusion can last from a few minutes up to an hour. The person may be able to talk and answer questions during this period, but they might not remember this. They might also be able to perform tasks such as undressing and going to bed but will not necessarily remember doing so.

Occasionally people might feel out of sorts for a few days before feeling back to normal again.

Appearing to be confused in public may also sometimes lead to an assumption that an individual is under the influence of drink or drugs. Wearing medical jewellery like a bracelet or necklace, or carrying a wallet sized epilepsy identification card, can help paramedics or the police to recognise this behaviour as a seizure or post-ictal phase.

## Recovery from a seizure at work

The Equality Act gives employees affected by epilepsy the right to ask for reasonable adjustments to support them in their workplace. This should include any measures put in place to help an employee recover from a seizure. Sometimes this may mean being allocated a quiet room to recover or being sent home safely to recover.

Employers also need to take into account that memory can be affected before, during and after a seizure. Measures like giving important information in written form or repeating information once the person has fully recovered can go a long way to make a person with epilepsy feel supported by their employer.

## Effect on learning

A seizure can also affect learning. Information given in the run up to a seizure and after the seizure will usually not be processed and the person will not remember any of it. Education bodies should have an epilepsy policy in place outlining the support available to pupils or students affected by epilepsy, including support during the recovery phase. Such a policy should also address the issue of absences from class or lectures due to a seizure.

## Post-ictal psychosis

Post-ictal psychosis is rare and only happens to a small number of people whose epilepsy is not controlled by medication. It is more common in those who experience clusters of tonic-clonic seizures. Post-ictal psychosis can appear within a few days, and up to a week, after seemingly having recovered from a seizure.

Psychosis is a medical term used when someone loses touch with reality. There is an initial recovery period after a seizure (the lucid phase) where the person seems to be recovering well. After the recovery period the person may start to experience delusions, hallucinations or unusual behaviour. These are often paranoid or fearful. This is called post-ictal psychosis. Post-ictal psychosis can last days or even weeks. **Always seek immediate medical advice if this applies to you or someone you care for.**

## Todd's paresis or post-ictal paralysis

Very occasionally people can experience a period of paralysis after a seizure. This can be a weakness, loss of movement and/or numbness. It usually occurs on one side of the body and can last from a few minutes to 48 hours. It can also affect speech, vision and hearing sometimes causing a temporary inability to hear, see or speak. The symptoms of Todd's paresis can be very similar to that of a stroke. Always seek urgent medical advice if you experience any of these symptoms to rule out a stroke.

**If you have any concerns about symptoms after a seizure, contact your GP, epilepsy specialist nurse or consultant for medical advice, or phone NHS24 on 111 out of hours.**

**Our resources are always free. If you would like to support our work please text FACTS to 70085 to donate £3. Texts cost £3 plus one standard rate message.**



[www.epilepsyscotland.org.uk](http://www.epilepsyscotland.org.uk)

**Freephone helpline: 0808 800 2200**

**Email: [contact@epilepsyscotland.org.uk](mailto:contact@epilepsyscotland.org.uk)**

**Head Office:  
48 Govan Road  
Glasgow  
G51 1JL**

**Tel: 0141 427 4911**

