

Seizures in Brain Tumor Patients

What is a seizure?

Seizures are sudden, uncontrolled body movements and changes in behavior that happen because of abnormal electrical activity in the brain. They can happen any time and without a known cause.

Seizures and Brain Tumors

Seizures are more common in patients with certain types of brain cancers. About 60% of brain tumor patients will experience a seizure at least once during their illness. Ask your cancer care team if you have a high risk of seizures.

Warning Signs of a Seizure

Here are some common features of seizures in people who have brain tumors:

- Seizures start suddenly.
- Patients lose consciousness and body tone. Twitching and relaxing muscle contractions come later.
- Patients lose control of bodily functions.
- There may be short periods of no breathing (30 seconds). The patient may turn blue.
- Seizures usually last two to three minutes.

Some patients may notice things that warn of a seizure coming on. This warning is called an aura. Auras sometimes take the form of a headache, a change of mood, a muscle twitch, or a certain smell.

What to Do When a Seizure Happens

DO

- Make sure the person can breathe. Move pillows and blankets away from the nose and mouth. Loosen tight clothing such as neckties or collars. If the person has trouble breathing, call 911.
- Gently guide the person to lie on his or her side on a flat surface—bed, sofa, floor, or ground.
- Clear the area of sharp or heavy objects that could hurt the person.
- Protect the person's head from getting bumped. Cushion it with a pillow or folded clothing.
- If the person is wearing glasses, take them off.
- Keep track of how long the seizure lasts.



Help a person having a seizure: loosen tight clothing, guide the person to lie on his or her side, and place a pillow under his or her head.

DON'T

- Do not panic. A person having a seizure usually only needs to be watched. Your job as a caregiver is to protect the person from further harm.
- Do not put anything in the person's mouth.
- Do not attempt to hold the person down.

What to Do after a Seizure

When the seizure is over, have the person rest on one side until he or she feels recovered.

People who have had a seizure are often confused for a while afterward. You can help by saying your name, where you are, and what happened.

Keep a record of seizure symptoms to tell the doctor later.

When to Call for Emergency Help

Call 911 or go to the emergency room if any of these things happen:

- The person has trouble breathing.
- The seizure lasts more than five minutes.
- The person is injured during the seizure.
- The person is pregnant or has diabetes.
- The seizure happens while the person is in water.
- A second seizure follows immediately.

IMPORTANT

If you have any question about the seriousness of seizures or any other symptom, please call your cancer care team right away.