

F.5 FITS – CONVULSIONS - SEIZURES

A person has a fit (a seizure or convulsions) if he suddenly shakes uncontrollably. It is different from normal shivering and trembling. It may manifest in all limbs or just be limited to a single limb.

The person having the fit may urinate and defecate without control. A fit can be caused by high fever, diseases (e.g. malaria, epilepsy...), poisoning (e.g. alcohol, drugs...) or a trauma (e.g. brain injury).

Epilepsy is a central nervous system disorder (neurological disorder) in which nerve cell activity in the brain becomes disrupted, causing seizures or periods of unusual behaviour, sensations and sometimes loss of consciousness. Epilepsy is usually a disease of the young. In the beginning the frequency of convulsions is usually less, but they become more and more frequent later. Epilepsy seizures may be of a 'minor' or 'major' kind. In minor epilepsy seizures, the casualty becomes pale, his eyes become fixed and staring and he becomes unconscious for a few seconds. He resumes his work soon as though nothing had happened. A major epilepsy seizure (also known as '*grand mal* seizures') is serious. The attack follows a headache, restlessness or a feeling of dullness. The casualty is usually aware that he is going to get an attack of an epileptic fit.

Children under the age of four often develop fits as a result of high temperature (fever) caused by infectious diseases. A child having a fit should be brought to a nearby healthcare facility for urgent examination by a doctor.

F.5.1 WHAT DO I SEE AND ENQUIRE?

You may observe following signs and symptoms:

- sudden uncontrollable shaking;
- falling down on the floor;
- loss of consciousness;
- foaming at the mouth; or
- the person might have earlier mentioned that he smelled, felt, tasted, heard or saw things differently.

If the fit is due to high temperature (fever):

- the skin might then feel hot and look reddish.

F.5.2 WHAT DO I DO?

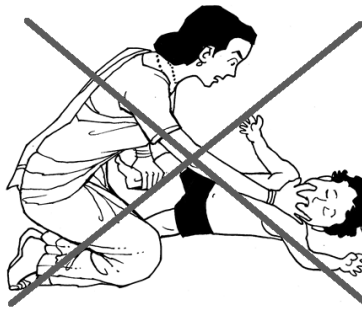
F.5.2.1 SAFETY FIRST

1. Make sure there is no danger to you, the person or bystanders.

F.5.2.2 PROVIDE FIRST AID



2. Remove objects that could hurt the person.



3. Do not hold the person down (do not restrain the person).



4. If possible, put something soft (cushion, clothing) under the head if the person is lying on the floor.



5. Make sure the person can breathe freely by loosening tight clothing around the neck (collar, tie).



6. Do not put anything into the person's mouth.

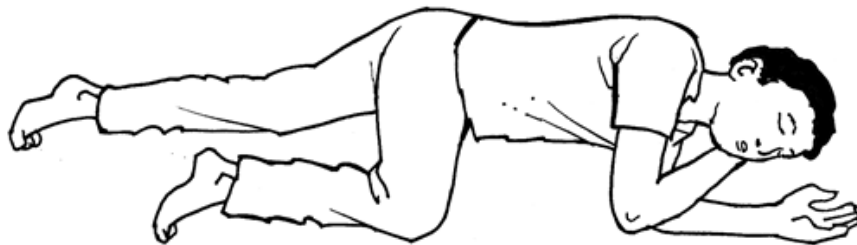


7. Do not put your fingers in the person's mouth.

i A person cannot swallow his saliva during a convulsion. A person might bite his own tongue, but this normally heals in a few days.

An object or a hand placed in the mouth of someone having a convulsion is dangerous for the victim and yourself.

8. For a child with high fever:
 - a. Remove clothing and blankets and ensure there is enough fresh air.
 - b. Do not make the child too cold.
 - c. Put pillows and soft padding around the child so that he cannot hurt himself.



- d. If possible, put the child in the recovery position.
- e. Sponge the child with water at room temperature.

9. When the fit stops: put the person in the recovery position if he is not yet in this position.
This will keep the breathing passage open and prevent vomit from entering the lungs.
10. Stay with the person till he gets better.
11. Reassure the person, parents and bystanders.
12. Do not give food or drinks to a child or person that has just had a fit.
13. Arrange urgent transport to the nearest healthcare facility if:
 - a. The person has high fever.
 - b. The person did not wake up between fits.
 - c. The person stopped breathing, or the situation worsens.
 - d. This was the person's first fit (and he has no fever).
 - e. The person is under influence of drugs or alcohol.

F.5.2.3 HYGIENE

Always wash your hands after taking care of a person. Use soap and water to wash your hands. If no soap is available, you can use ash to wash your hands. Alcohol-based sanitizers can also be used, if available.

F.5.3 WHEN TO REFER TO A HEALTHCARE FACILITY?



Always arrange urgent transport to the nearest healthcare facility if the person has more than one fit and he did not wake up in between; the person has high fever, or the person's condition deteriorates further.



Always refer the person who has suffered a fit to a healthcare facility for further treatment.

G. GASTROINTESTINAL TRACT, DIARRHOEA, FOOD POISONING AND DIABETES

In this chapter you will learn about:

- The gastrointestinal system.
- Diarrhoea.
- Food poisoning.
- Diabetes.