Seizures

Some hospice patients may be prone to seizures because of their disease or if they have a history of seizures. A seizure occurs when the nerve cells in the brain discharge an abnormal electrical impulse. This can cause involuntary muscle spasms (convulsions).

Your physician may have provided anti-convulsive medication to help control the changes in the brain. Try to keep a regular schedule for this medication, because it works best when taken on time each day.

Signs of a Seizure

Some signs of seizures are:

- Eyes rolling back or a blank stare
- Stiffening and clenching fists or flailing arms and legs (convulsions) that usually last about 5 to 10 minutes.
- Involuntary loss of stool and/or urine during the seizure

During the Seizure

The person having a seizure is usually not aware that he/she is having a seizure. When you are with a person who is having a seizure, try to follow these suggestions:

- Stay as calm as possible.
- Try to gently lower the person to the floor if the person is out of bed when the seizure occurs.
- Place something soft under the person’s head. A pillow, a rolled piece of clothing or a towel will help protect the head.
- Clear the area around the person. Move furniture or any object that could cause injury if hit by the person during the seizure.
• Loosen any tight clothing.

• Do not attempt to insert anything in the person’s mouth. He/she may clench the teeth during the seizure, and putting anything in the mouth can cause injury. He/she will not swallow their tongue or choke on it.

• Gently turn the patient’s head to one side if vomiting occurs during a seizure.

• Do not try to restrain the movement. This can injure limbs or prolong the seizure.

**After the Seizure**

After the seizure, consciousness generally returns very slowly. When the person awakens, he/she rarely has any memory of the seizure. The person may be confused or may not remember where they are or what happened. The person may be very sleepy and tired for up to 48 hours after the seizure, have a headache and be sore and achy. You can help by following some of these suggestions:

• Turn the person onto their side, especially if he/she has vomited. Clean their mouth.

• Remain with the person until consciousness is regained.

• Call them gently by name as they awaken and tell them who you are, where they are and what happened. Offer calm and gentle reassurance.

• **Call your Arbor Hospice nurse.** The nurse may ask how long the seizure lasted, what the movements looked like, and what the patient was doing before the seizure occurred.

• Encourage rest and offer fluids and foods when the person is fully awake.
Special instructions:

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Please feel free to call your Arbor Hospice team any time with questions or concerns you may have about seizures. We want to be responsive to your needs and concerns.