

Status Epilepticus

Status epilepticus is a condition in which a seizure lasts for thirty minutes or more, or when one seizure follows another without the person really regaining consciousness.

Seizures can be either partial or generalised. Non-convulsive or partial status epilepticus affects behaviour but does not cause tonic or clonic movements. The person may be in a continuous confusional state, but without any convulsive features. The seizure needs to be recognised and professional medical advice sought.

Convulsive status epilepticus must be recognised and treated promptly. It is a rare condition, but can be life threatening and needs urgent professional medical help. If a convulsive seizure shows no sign of stopping after five minutes, it is imperative to call an ambulance to get the person to hospital as quickly as possible.

The most common cause of status epilepticus occurring is sudden cessation of antiepileptic medication. It can also be due to sedative hypnotic drugs, alcohol, high fever (especially before age 5), metabolic disorders, and cerebral lesions.

When a person is rushed to hospital in a status attack, a lot of information must be provided in a short period of time. It may be helpful to have a card with the

patient's name, age, types of seizures, medications and usual dosages, height, weight and doctor's name and phone number, ready for use in such emergencies.

Convulsive status is sometimes treated with rectal diazepam, buccal or nasal midazolam. In hospital it is most commonly treated with a rapid acting intravenous drug. It is a serious condition and can be life threatening. Brain damage may occur following prolonged periods of convulsive status. Where status occurs, it is important to attempt to identify and treat the cause of status.

Reference:

Buchanan, N (1992) Living with epilepsy.

Devinsky, O (1994) Ciba Clinical Symposia 46 (1)

Although every effort has been made to ensure up to date and accurate information is provided, Epilepsy Queensland cannot accept any liability in relation to the information provided. It is strongly recommended that you discuss any information with your doctor or other relevant organisation.

