



BRIGHAM AND WOMEN'S HOSPITAL

Neonatal Intensive Care Unit

Parent Information Sheet: Neonatal Seizures in Full Term Infants

What is a seizure?

A seizure is a sudden, abnormal, and excessive electrical discharge in the brain's cells. Seizures in babies are very different from ones in adults. Infants can have "subtle" seizures which can be hard to diagnose as they are brief and often difficult to see. Sometimes seizures in babies look very similar to normal infant behavior and/or movements.

What causes seizures in full term babies?

The most common time to have a seizure is in the first week of life. Many things can cause seizures in babies, including:

- Decreased oxygen delivery to the brain
- Bleeding in the brain
- Infection
- Abnormal formation/structure of the brain.
- Low blood calcium level
- Low blood sugar
- Sometimes, the exact reason cannot be found

Are seizures serious?

Seizures can be serious. It is important to find the cause and try to stop the seizures or make them less frequent.

What tests are done when a baby has a seizure?

Many tests may be performed. An ultrasound or MRI of the brain is done to look for bleeding or abnormal structure of the brain. Your baby will have an EEG, or electroencephalogram. This test measures the electrical activity of the brain by placing leads on the head and recording the brain wave patterns. Sometimes, an EEG also involves videoing the baby's movements as well. Blood studies are done and many times a spinal tap may be necessary.

How are seizures treated?

It is important to find the cause of the seizure in order to treat it. For example, if the seizures are from an infection, antibiotics are needed. For many causes of seizures, specific medications (anti-seizure medicines) are given to help control and, hopefully, prevent future seizures. How long your baby will need the medication depends upon the reason for the seizures.

Some Seizure Signs

Eye blinking, deviation, or staring

Lip smacking or chewing

Unusual pedaling movements of arms and/or legs

Tremors, shaking, or rhythmic jerking movements of arms and/or legs that do not stop when baby is touched

Pauses in breathing (apnea)



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