

## Appendix 5 CHEMICAL-INDUCED CONVULSIONS (SEIZURES, FITS)

Chemically induced convulsions may occur in poisoning by substances directly irritating the brain. They may be preceded by mental agitation.

Convulsions are involuntary contractions of the muscles. There is a variation in severity from twitching of the muscles to general heaving of the body. During a seizure the casualty is often unconscious for a short time and then confused with a headache – sleep usually follows. In severe cases, the casualty does not regain consciousness between attacks.

Convulsions may occur at any time after poisoning and recur several times. The more frequent and longer the attacks, the greater the danger to life. After exposure to certain chemicals, convulsions may occur after a time delay of hours, especially after skin exposure.

The main risk of convulsions is impaired ventilation (leading to inadequate oxygen supply to tissues).

- Give ventilation support with 8 L of oxygen per minute if the victim does not breathe adequately.
- Administer controlled ventilation.
- The casualty may hurt himself during convulsions. Never restrain him forcibly, as this may cause injury, but remove hard objects and surround him with pillows, clothing or other soft material.
- After the fit is over, let the casualty sleep it off, as he may be rather confused and dazed when he comes round. Reassure him, and do not leave him until you are sure he is aware of his surroundings, and knows what he is doing.

