



How would I  
feel in this  
situation...

## Empathy for post-fitting patients

Have you ever witnessed how a person responds at the end of a seizure?

If you haven't, the transition from the seizure back to the individual's normal state is referred to as the 'post-ictal period' (an **ictus** is a seizure) and signifies the recovery period for the brain.

The post-ictal period may last for a period of only seconds to hours, depending on several factors including which part(s) of the brain were affected, and whether the person was on anti-seizure medication.

**Embarrassment:** As the person's level of awareness gradually improves, there are other symptoms that occur during the post-ictal period such as confusion and memory loss, but the one that I was most conscious of, even prior to its occurrence when I was in the ambulance service, was that of 'embarrassment' for the person.

**Try to place yourself in this position** - you are undertaking a training program, when for the first time you suffer a seizure. When your conscious state improves you slowly realise that:

- a) I'm in a room filled people who are mostly strangers
- b) I've been incontinent of urine and possibly faeces too

**Then ask yourself, 'How would I feel?'** I think we all know the answer to that question.

**Key patient management point** - I believe there is one 'key' thing you should think about as a first aider when faced with this scenario, and that is the one of 'understanding and empathy'.

As an example, my technique when dealing with this situation when I was a paramedic was, to kneel really close to the patient; in fact I'd place myself right into their personal space and speak softly and reassuringly at the same time.

My major objective was to create trust, and to assure them I was there to help them. I'd even say things like, *'Don't worry, you'll probably never see these people again!'*, and /or *'don't worry about it, I'm not concerned and I'll assist you with a blanket or towel to cover you; we'll get through this together!'*

These and other relevant sympathetic reassurances are greatly appreciated by people in this situation. Having someone to shepherd bystanders away from the immediate area was always valuable too.

So should you ever come across a fitting patient, try to place yourself in their shoes and give them the reassurance you'd want, by simply asking yourself – *'How would I feel in this situation?'*

**If you help a person to regain their dignity in this situation, you've done a fantastic job, not only as a first aider, but as a decent human being.** I hope this helps. 😊

Kind Regards

John Haines