

Reflex Anoxic Seizures (RAS) (Paediatric Syncope)

What is RAS?

Reflex anoxic seizures (RAS) is a medical condition where some children faint when they hurt themselves, have a shock or a surprise (which could be nasty or nice).

It can happen when you hurt yourself, fall over, have a bump or even when you are not feeling very well. Sometimes it might happen because something has shocked you, or made you jump.

What happens in an RAS attack?

Something unexpected like pain, shock or fright causes the heart and breathing to briefly stop. Think of a hedgehog when it faces danger, it curls up into a ball to protect itself and only uncurls when it is safe to do so. This is like RAS, the body shuts down until the shock, pain or fright has gone away. The person who faints will fall to the ground, the colour of their skin might be very pale or slightly blue, their body might become stiff, and their arms and legs might jerk a little bit.

What should you do if you see somebody have an RAS attack?

If you see this happen to somebody, it is very important to try and stay as calm as you can, and try not to panic. Put them into the recovery position in a safe environment. Put them in the recovery position by following the next 3 steps:



1. Put their arm nearest to you at a right angle to their body with their palm facing upwards.
2. Put their other arm across their chest and make sure their cheek is resting on the back of their hand.
3. Bend their leg at the knee to stop them rolling over too far.

Remember to make sure that they have a clear airway and can breathe properly. Get a friend to go and get a teacher or adult, whilst you stay with the person. Make sure that the person is safe, and there is nothing dangerous around them. Stay with the person until an adult can take over, but make sure that everybody remains very calm and quiet.

Being friends with somebody who has RAS

People with RAS can still run around and play like everybody else, because they are still a normal and healthy person. When playing sports like football, netball or gymnastics, maybe just let them watch first, so that they become used to what might happen before they play. If you are going swimming, let the person soak their feet for a little while first to get used to the temperature of the water, then they can swim and splash about too! The most important thing is to treat your friend normally, just like everybody else.

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