MUSC Patient Handout
Information On The Vagus Nerve Stimulator (VNS) for Schools

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AS AN ACADEMIC MEDICAL CENTER, MUSC offers benefits to the residents of South Carolina and beyond. The highly dedicated, professional team focuses on providing the most effective therapies available while also striving to develop new therapies within a highly active basic and clinical research program. These efforts are backed by facilities with the latest technology. This resource was developed to help patients understand more about their condition, treatment, or procedure. This handout is meant to be used as a guide to supplement your healthcare providers instructions. It is not intended to be used as a substitute for professional medical care. Only your physician can diagnose and treat a medical condition. Please consult your physician if you have any questions.

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What is the Vagus Nerve Stimulator:
The VNS provides a mild electrical stimulation to the brain from a generator which is usually implanted in the left side of the chest. This stimulation is sent to the brain via a lead that is attached to the vagus nerve. This usually occurs every 5 minutes for 30 seconds.

Why the stimulator is used:
The VNS system is used in patients who have uncontrolled seizures which have not responded to anti-convulsant medications, the ketogenic diet and/or epilepsy surgery.

The Magnet:
If the patient or caregiver/teacher knows they are about to have a seizure or if the patient is having a seizure, the magnet can be used to try to abort the seizure or decrease the length and/or intensity of the seizure.
To use the magnet it must be placed over the VNS system for a count of 3 (1-1000, 2-1000, 3-1000) then remove. This will deliver an extra stimulation to the patient which is stronger and lasts longer. Wait 60-90 seconds before using the magnet a second time. If the seizure does not stop after a second use, call 911.

Magnet safety:
The magnet can damage computer disks, credit cards and other items affected by strong magnetic fields. Keep the magnet at least 8-10 inches away from these items.
The magnet needs to be available at all times. There are a variety of ways to do this: wrist pouch, waist pouch, bookbag, etc. The school nurse or the teacher can discuss with the family the best option for them to have access to the magnet.

For further information please contact the following websites:
Epilepsy Foundation Association.com---for School Nurses