

HEALTH IDENTIFIERS & SYMPTOMS OF ILLNESS

# SEIZURES

The brain “talks” to the rest of the body using electrical signals. Sometimes, there is too much electrical activity in the brain. When this happens, you might lose control of your muscles, lose consciousness or have a change in behavior. This is called a seizure. People who have many seizures are said to have epilepsy.



## SOME FACTS about SEIZURES

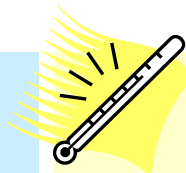
- There are two main classes of seizures: **Generalized and Partial Seizures**. Partial seizures (common or complex) only affect part of the brain. Generalized seizures involve all parts of the brain and are more common.
- Generalized seizures can be further divided into **tonic-clonic/grand mal seizures** or **absence/petit mal seizures**.
  - **Tonic Clonic** (formerly called Grand Mal): These are often recognized by uncontrollable muscle jerking, sudden loss of muscle strength, loss of bladder control, and temporary loss of consciousness.
  - **Absence** (formerly called Petit Mal): These are more common in children. It is sometimes hard to recognize when someone is having an absence seizure. The person might appear to be day-dreaming or not paying attention, but in reality, they are unable to respond. They may also display unusual behaviors.



## CAUSES

It is not always possible to determine the cause of a seizure. However, they are sometimes caused by the following:

- High fevers in infants
- An injury to the brain, a brain tumor or a stroke
- A reaction to a vaccine, poison, snake bites, medication, drugs or alcohol
- Electric shock
- Choking
- Heart Disease
- Heat illness
- Medication withdrawal
- Low blood sugar
- Toxemia in pregnancy



## SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

A Tonic-Clonic seizure looks very different from an absence seizure. If a person has a seizure, the most important thing is to prevent an injury and record the symptoms.

### TONIC CLONIC SEIZURE:

**Before the seizure** there maybe a sense of anxiety, nausea, dizziness, a change in vision, or a strong smell.

**During the seizure**, the person may have:

- Loss of consciousness
- Muscle spasms and twitching limbs
- Tingling in parts of the body
- Stiffening of the entire body
- Stop breathing for a moment
- Fall down
- Drool, froth at the mouth, grunt or snort
- Loss of bladder or bowel control
- Eyes may stare in one direction
- Skin may turn very red or even blue

**ABSENCE SEIZURE** - the person may:

- Be unresponsive, “not there”
- Stare “into space” or blink very quickly
- Appear drunk or drugged
- Move without purpose
- Appear to be chewing or smacking lips
- Fidget or pick at clothing
- Have skin changes such as sweating or goose bumps



## PREVENTION

- For people known to have seizures: Ensure they take their **prescribed medications** as directed
- **Prevent Injury:** People who have epilepsy often know before they are going to have a seizure. If they think they are about to have a seizure, lay them down on their side in a place where they are not likely to get hurt should they start to seize.



## WHAT TO DO

### DURING the Seizure

- **Protect** the person from injury
  - Lie the person down (on their side if possible)
  - Remove sharp objects from the area
  - Loosen or remove tight clothing like ties and collars, also remove glasses
- Watch the person's **breathing**. If they have trouble breathing, seek immediate medical attention
- Stay calm and **observe** the seizure. It is important to know how long it lasted and what were the signs
- Let the person have a seizure - You can NOT stop it

### AFTER the Seizure

- Continue to **observe** breathing
- **Stay** with the person until they are awake
- Let the person **rest**. They will be tired
- **Record** the seizure (length, what happened)
- Call the doctor if needed



## WHAT NOT TO DO

- **DO NOT** try to stop the seizure
- **DO NOT** try to force anything into the person's mouth or between their teeth
- **DO NOT** allow them to drink or eat anything until they are completely awake



## DOCUMENT

- Be sure to record:
  - What the person was doing before the seizure
  - How long the seizure lasted
  - What the seizure looked like
  - How long the person took to recover
- File an **Incident Report** (if required) and complete other documentation such as writing down a description in the logbook if the person requires emergency medical care.



## CALL YOUR DOCTOR

### Call the doctor or the nurse:

- **If this is the first seizure**, seek emergency medical care.
- **If this is NOT the first seizure**, the doctor should have given instructions about what to document such as **when** it started, **how long** it lasted, **what** it looked like, and **how long** it took to recover. Instructions will include when a call to the doctor is needed.



## EMERGENCY

### Immediately seek medical care if:

- This is the first seizure
- This seizure is very different from the usual seizure
- The seizure lasts for more than 5 minutes
- There is trouble breathing, or the person turns blue or has a poor color, if the person is not breathing more than one minute after the seizure ends **START CPR**
- The person remains unconscious
- There is an injury
- The seizures occur one right after the other



## TO LEARN MORE - Go to these websites:

- <http://www.epilepsy.com>
- <http://www.allrefer.com>
- <http://www.webMD.com>
- <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/seizures.html>