



Seizure Types and First Aid

You may have seen someone having a seizure and not even realized it. A seizure can look like many different things and have many different symptoms. About 1 out of 12 people will have a seizure during their lifetime. Anyone, whether they are young, old, healthy, or otherwise could have a seizure. There are over 20 different seizure types. A person with epilepsy (recurring seizures) may experience one kind of seizure or many different kinds. The kind of seizure a person has depends on which part and how much of the brain is affected by the electrical disturbance that produces seizures. Knowing how to recognize seizures and what to do will help keep a person safe.

Generalized Seizures

Seizure Type	Seizure Symptoms	Postictal (post-seizure) Symptoms	First Aid/What to Do
Absence (Petit Mal)	<input type="checkbox"/> Blank stare <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of awareness <input type="checkbox"/> Pause in activity <input type="checkbox"/> Possible eyelid fluttering <input type="checkbox"/> Begin and end abruptly <input type="checkbox"/> Usually last 2 to 15 seconds	<input type="checkbox"/> No recollection of seizure <input type="checkbox"/> Promptly resumes activity	<input type="checkbox"/> Repeat or provide any information that the person may have missed
Tonic-Clonic (Grand Mal)	<input type="checkbox"/> Abrupt loss of consciousness <input type="checkbox"/> Falling <input type="checkbox"/> Stiffening of body <input type="checkbox"/> Jerking – affects the whole body <input type="checkbox"/> Shallow breathing or drooling may occur <input type="checkbox"/> Skin may become pale or bluish <input type="checkbox"/> Usually end within 3 minutes	<input type="checkbox"/> No recollection of seizure <input type="checkbox"/> Confusion <input type="checkbox"/> Headache <input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue	<input type="checkbox"/> Protect head from injury <input type="checkbox"/> Move objects away <input type="checkbox"/> Gently turn on side to keep airway clear <input type="checkbox"/> Do not restrain <input type="checkbox"/> Do not put anything in the mouth (this could cause choking or break teeth) <input type="checkbox"/> Be friendly and reassuring as consciousness returns <input type="checkbox"/> Call ambulance if the seizure lasts more than 5 minutes, there is no known history of seizures, or if injured
Atonic (Drop Attacks)	<input type="checkbox"/> Abrupt loss of consciousness <input type="checkbox"/> Sudden loss of muscle tone (head drops, collapse)	<input type="checkbox"/> No recollection of seizure <input type="checkbox"/> Generally quick recovery within 1 minute	<input type="checkbox"/> Call ambulance if injuries are suspected
Myoclonic	<input type="checkbox"/> No loss of consciousness <input type="checkbox"/> Rapid brief muscle contractions	<input type="checkbox"/> Promptly resumes activity	<input type="checkbox"/> Offer reassurance and assistance



Partial Seizures

Seizure Type	Seizure Symptoms	Postictal (post-seizure) Symptoms	First Aid/What to Do
Focal Aware (Simple Partial)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> No loss of consciousness <input type="checkbox"/> Sensory symptoms (smell, sound, or visual distortion, or tingling), or <input type="checkbox"/> Psychic symptoms (feelings of fear, déjà vu, or hallucinations), or <input type="checkbox"/> Changes in muscle activity (twitching) <input type="checkbox"/> Usually last 10 seconds to 2 minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Possible short-term period of weakness or loss of sensation <input type="checkbox"/> May progress into a tonic-clonic or complex partial seizure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Offer reassurance and assistance
Focal Impaired Awareness (Complex Partial)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Consciousness is impaired <input type="checkbox"/> Often starts with a blank stare <input type="checkbox"/> Repetitive purposeless actions, such as: hand wringing, lip smacking, wandering, or nonsensical speech <input type="checkbox"/> Movements are clumsy or disoriented <input type="checkbox"/> Usually last 1 to 3 minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> No recollection of seizure <input type="checkbox"/> Confusion <input type="checkbox"/> Fatigue <input type="checkbox"/> May progress into a tonic-clonic seizure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Speak calmly <input type="checkbox"/> Gently guide person away from possible hazards <input type="checkbox"/> Stay with the person until they regain full awareness <input type="checkbox"/> Don't restrain the person unless essential for safety <input type="checkbox"/> Offer to call a taxi, friend, or relative to help <input type="checkbox"/> If full consciousness does not return, call an ambulance

Most seizures end after a few moments or a few minutes. If seizures last for more than 5 minutes, or occur in a series, there is an increased risk of status epilepticus - a continuous state of seizure. This is a medical emergency and an ambulance must be called.

As in all medical situations, stay calm in order to best assess the situation and to assist the person. Using your common sense and sensitivity is essential.

For more information on seizures, first aid, epilepsy facts, and related issues, please go to the BC Epilepsy Society website at www.bcepilepsy.com

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You can join the BC Epilepsy Society as a member and receive all the program and service benefits.

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