

EPILEPSY FACT SHEET

First Aid for Seizures

GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF FIRST AID

- Stay calm
- Protect the person from harm while they are unable to do so for themselves
- Check for medical ID
- Let the seizure run its course; once started, it can't be stopped—unless the individual has rescue medication either on their person (in a special necklace/bracelet), or with a designated person
- Do not restrain unless imminent danger exists and there is no other alternative
- Remain with the person until they have recovered
- Reassure the person as they recover

GENERALIZED TONIC CLONIC (Convulsive)

- Body stiffens
- There may be a loud cry caused by air being forced quickly from the lungs
- The person falls to the ground
- Body begins rhythmic jerking movements
- The skin may appear pale or bluish – color will return after seizure ends
- The person may bite their tongue or cheek
- Bladder or bowel control may be lost

Duration: 1-3 minutes – seldom longer

Recovery: Consciousness returns slowly, person may be confused, agitated, sleepy or depressed

First Aid

- Time the Seizure—if it goes on longer than **five minutes**, or a second seizure starts without a full recovery from the first, **CALL AN AMBULANCE**
- Move harmful objects
- Put something soft under head
- Remove glasses and loosen tight clothing
- When convulsing stops roll the person on their side to clear airway
- Ask simple questions to make sure the person returns to full awareness

- X Do not restrain the individual
- X Do not put anything in the mouth
- X Do not leave the person until they are fully reoriented

If a blanket is available, it can be used to cover the individual in the event that bowel or bladder control is lost, to help retain dignity and privacy.



FOCAL IMPAIRED AWARENESS—Adults Mainly

- There is a loss of awareness of surroundings
- The person appears dazed and confused
- Characterized by repetitive movements such as: random walking, lip smacking, picking at clothes, and mumbling

Duration: 2-4 minutes

Recovery: Gradual – The person may be disoriented and confused.

First Aid

- Move harmful objects out of the way
- If they are wandering, gently guide person away from danger – i.e., stairs, furniture
- Offer reassurance after the seizure

X Do not restrain the individual

GENERALIZED ABSENCE SEIZURES—Children Mainly

These seizures involve brief lapses in consciousness

Duration: 2 to 10 seconds.

Recovery: No recovery time is needed

First Aid

- Provide missed information
- Provide a partner to assist the child in keeping up with in class activities
- Provide reassurance if needed

When to Call an Ambulance

- **There is no medical ID** and no way of knowing if the seizure is caused by epilepsy
- The seizure continues for **more than five minutes**
- **A second seizure starts without a full recovery** – known as - Status epilepticus
- **Consciousness does not start to return** after the seizure has stopped or there is prolonged confusion
- The person is pregnant, injured, or diabetic
- The seizure **happens in water**
- **Prolonged pain** following the seizure could indicate a broken bone
- Severe headache



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