

# Seizures

## Seizure

A seizure is an electrical disturbance in the brain. While having a seizure, a person's body may jerk and twitch uncontrollably. The person may lose consciousness. In most cases, seizures will last just a few minutes and stop on their own. They are not painful and do not cause brain damage.

Most seizures can be controlled by medicine. People who have seizures should expect to live a normal life without restrictions. However, until the seizures are controlled by medicines, the person should not participate in activities that are extremely physical, involve jumping from high places, or swim and bathe unattended.

Some seizures do not stop without medicine. "Status epilepticus" is a name for a seizure that lasts longer than 20 minutes, or seizures that happen one after another without waking up in between.

The person may want to get a medical identification band that indicates the person has seizures. These can be purchased at most pharmacies.

There are different types of seizures, depending on the part of the brain that is involved. Seizures can be located in the full brain, or in just part of the brain.

## Types of Seizures

### Simple

This type of seizure is formerly known as Jacksonian motor seizures. It may involve jerking of one limb or side of the body. The person remains conscious during this type of seizure.

### Complex

This type of seizure is formerly known as a psychomotor-temporal lobe seizure. It may appear that the person is confused, drugged, or disturbed emotionally. The person may smack his or her lips, demonstrate activity without any purpose, or perform a repetitive motion, like fidgeting with clothing. This type of seizure lasts 1 or 2 minutes and the person may struggle if restrained.

### Tonic — Clonic

This type of seizure is formerly known as a grand mal seizure. It affects the entire body. The person may stiffen, jerk, and even fall. There may be a loss of consciousness. The person may cry out, bite his or her tongue, turn pale, or stop breathing. There may be a loss of bladder or bowel control. This type of seizure may last 1 to 3 minutes.

## Absence

This type of seizure is formerly known as a Petit Mal seizure. It does not affect the entire body. The person may stare, either blinkingly or non-blinkingly, twitch, or smack his or her lips. The person's hands may jerk. This is the most common type of seizure in children. This lasts just a few seconds and may be confused with a daydream.

## Warning Signs

Some people have a strange feeling or sensation before they have a seizure. This sensation is called an aura. It may include:

- ringing or buzzing in the ear
- dizziness
- strong emotions
- bright lights.

If a particular sensation happens repeatedly before a seizure, this can be used as an early warning to find a safe place for protection during the seizure.

## What To Do During a Seizure

- Remain calm.
- Lay the person on his or her side with something soft under the head. Do not restrain the person or put anything in his or her mouth.
- Check a clock to time the seizure.
- Watch for arm, leg, or eye movements.
- Check the person's breathing.

## Health Care Team Involvement

Call your health care provider if seizures are happening more often, or if they seem different than usual.

Your health care team may want to test the person who is having seizures. An electroencephalogram (EEG) is done to measure the electrical activity in the brain. A test, such as a CT ("cat" scan) or MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) will create images of the brain. Blood or urine tests may also be necessary.

Medicines may be given orally or in a vein (IV). Blood tests will make sure that the person is getting the right amount of medicine. Call your health care team if the person refuses to take their medicine, is vomiting medicine, or seems very drowsy.

## When To Call 911

Call 911 if:

- the seizure is longer than 5 minutes
- the person has a few seizures without regaining consciousness
- the person has a blue or purple tinge to his or her skin tone
- the person is not breathing for more than 30 to 60 seconds.