

Seizures: First Aid

A SEIZURE IS CONSIDERED AN EMERGENCY WHEN:

- It lasts longer than 5 minutes.
- The individual has repeated seizures without regaining consciousness, or has a second seizure within a few minutes.
- There is co-morbid diabetes.
- It is a first-time seizure.
- Breathing difficulties are present.
- It results in an injury or occurs in water.
- There is persistent confusion or unconsciousness.
- There is a significant change in that person's seizure pattern (type, length, associated symptoms).

In a seizure emergency, CALL 9-1-1 – Seek Medical Help Immediately!

DURING THE SEIZURE

Non-convulsive seizure
(e.g., absence, simple partial or complex partial)

- Reassure the person.
- Protect the person from injury.
- Guide and support the person as needed.

Convulsive (tonic-clonic) seizure
(aka Grand Mal)

- Keep calm, reassure the person and others, and let the seizure run its course.
- Protect the person from injury:
 - If needed, ease the person to the floor.
 - If needed, and if the person is in a wheelchair, hold the wheelchair and ensure the brakes are on to protect him or her from injury.
 - Loosen tight clothing around the neck.
 - Protect the person's head and body from injury.
 - Remove anything from the area that may cause injury.
- Do **not** hold the person down.
- Do **not** put anything between their teeth.
- If the person starts to bleed from the mouth, do not panic. He or she may have bitten their tongue.
- Observe what happens so that you may tell the doctor about what you see, or record this information afterwards (length of seizure, types of movements, to which side the head and/or eyes turned, how long before returning to full consciousness).

AFTER THE SEIZURE

- Once the person has relaxed, turn them on their side to make sure there's an open airway and to prevent them from choking on anything.
- If they are in a wheelchair, set the wheelchair to a "partial recline" position (not "full recline") and gently turn the person's head to the side to let the saliva flow out of the mouth.
- Be reassuring, comforting and calm as awareness returns.
- After the seizure, let them sleep if, needed.

As soon as possible, fill out the seizure monitoring chart (baseline) as accurately as you can.

Reference

Epilepsy Ontario. *First Aid for Seizures*. Ontario: Epilepsy Ontario. Retrieved June 27, 2011 from www.epilepsyontario.org.