

What is Epilepsy?

Epilepsy is a medical condition that produces seizures affecting a variety of mental and physical functions. It's also called a seizure disorder. When a person has two or more unprovoked seizures, they are considered to have epilepsy. Almost 3 million people in the U.S. have some form of epilepsy. About 200,000 new cases of seizure disorders and epilepsy are diagnosed each year. A seizure happens when a brief, strong surge of electrical activity affects part or all of the brain. One in 10 adults will have a seizure sometime during their life.

Seizures can last from a few seconds to a few minutes. They can have many symptoms, from convulsions and loss of consciousness to some that are not always recognized as seizures by the person experiencing them or by health care professionals: blank staring, lip smacking, or jerking movements of arms and legs.

Seizure first aid varies for each type of seizure. It is not difficult, but can easily be mishandled. To keep a person who is having a seizure safe and comfortable, take a moment to learn proper first aid for seizures

First Aid for Seizures

(Convulsions, generalized tonic-clonic, grand mal)



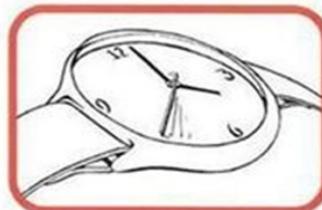
Cushion head, remove glasses



Loosen tight clothing



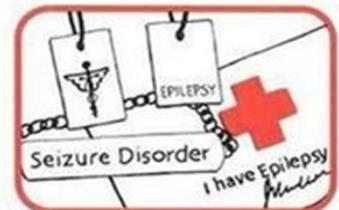
Turn on side



Time the seizure with a watch



Don't put anything in mouth



Look for I.D.



Don't hold down



As seizure ends...



...offer help

**JULIE
FRUTIGER**

**PARISH
NURSE**

If seizure lasts more than 5 minutes call 911

People who have had a Complex Partial seizure should be fully conscious and aware before being left on their own. Make sure they know the date, where they are, where they're going next. Confusion may last longer than the seizure itself and may be hazardous. If full awareness does not return, call for medical assistance.

Most seizures in people with epilepsy are not medical emergencies. They end after a minute or two without harm and usually do not require a trip to the emergency room. But sometimes there are good reasons to call or emergency help. A seizure in someone who does not have epilepsy could be a sign of a serious illness. Other reasons to call an ambulance include:

- The seizure lasts longer than five minutes without signs of slowing down or if a person has trouble breathing afterwards, appears to be in pain or recovery is unusual in some way.
- The person has another seizure soon after the first one.
- The person cannot be awakened after the seizure activity has stopped.
- The person became injured during the seizure.
- The person becomes aggressive.
- The seizure occurs in water.
- The person has a health condition like diabetes or heart disease or is pregnant.
- No "epilepsy" or "seizure disorder" I.D.

Sources:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
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