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Article Link: <http://www.webmd.com/epilepsy/tc/helping-a-person-during-an-epileptic-seizure-topic-overview>

## Epilepsy Health Center

### Helping a Person During a Seizure - Topic Overview

If you see someone who is having a seizure, stay calm. Although seizures seem to last a long time, they usually do not last more than 60 to 90 seconds. Time the seizure, if you can. If the seizure lasts longer than 3 minutes or the person seizing is pregnant (no matter how long the seizure lasts), **call 911 or other emergency services immediately.**

A **seizure** can be terrifying. A seizure temporarily interferes with muscle control, movement, speech, vision, or awareness. It may cause a person's entire body to shake violently for a few seconds to a few minutes, and he or she may lose consciousness.

Seizures can be mild to severe, and they affect people differently. Even though you may feel helpless around someone having a seizure and find it difficult to watch, there are many things you can do to help.

#### How to help during a seizure

- ✘ Protect the person from injury.
  - Keep him or her from falling if you can, or try to guide the person gently to the floor.
  - Try to move furniture or other objects that might injure the person during the seizure.
  - If the person is having a seizure and is on the ground when you arrive, put something soft under his or her head.
- ✘ Do not force anything, including your fingers, into the person's mouth. Putting something in the person's mouth may cause injuries to him or her, such as chipped teeth or a fractured jaw. You could also get bitten.
- ✘ Turn the person onto his or her side, with the mouth down, unless the person resists being moved.
- ✘ Do not try to hold down or move the person.

#### How to help after a seizure

- ✘ Check the person for injuries.
- ✘ If you could not turn the person onto his or her side during the seizure, do so when the seizure ends and the person is more relaxed.
- ✘ If the person is having trouble breathing, use your finger to gently clear his or her mouth of any vomit or saliva.
- ✘ Loosen tight clothing around the person's neck and waist.
- ✘ Provide a safe area where the person can rest.
- ✘ Do not offer anything to eat or drink until the person is fully awake and alert.
- ✘ Stay with the person until he or she is awake and familiar with the surroundings. Most people will be sleepy or confused after a seizure.

#### Things to watch for during a seizure

You may be able to provide valuable feedback to the doctor treating the person having the seizure. Try to remember:

- ❖ How the person's body moved.
- ❖ How long the seizure lasted.
- ❖ How the person acted before the seizure.
- ❖ How the person acted immediately after the seizure.
- ❖ Whether the person suffered any injuries from the seizure.

### When to seek emergency help

**Seizures** do not always require urgent care. However, **call 911 or other emergency services immediately** if:

- ❖ The person having a seizure stops breathing for longer than 30 seconds. After calling 911 or other emergency services, begin rescue breathing.
- ❖ The seizure lasts longer than 3 minutes. (The person may have entered a life-threatening state of prolonged seizure called **status epilepticus**.)
- ❖ The person seizing is pregnant (no matter how long the seizure lasts). This could be a sign of **preeclampsia**.
- ❖ More than one seizure occurs within 24 hours.
- ❖ The person having a seizure does not respond normally within 1 hour after the seizure or has any of the following symptoms:
  - Reduced awareness and wakefulness or is not fully awake
  - Confusion
  - Nausea or vomiting
  - Dizziness
  - Inability to walk or stand
  - Fever
- ❖ A seizure occurs after the person complains of a sudden, severe headache.
- ❖ A seizure occurs with **signs of a stroke**, such as trouble speaking or understanding speech, loss of vision, and inability to move part or all of one side of the body.
- ❖ A seizure follows a head injury.
- ❖ A person with **diabetes** has a seizure. Low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) or very high blood sugar (hyperglycemia) can cause seizures in a person with diabetes.
- ❖ A seizure occurs after eating poison or breathing fumes.

### Helping a Person During a Seizure Topics

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