

Epilepsy—First Aid for Seizures

Keep a list of emergency contacts handy, e.g. family, GP, carers, neighbours, with a description of your seizures and what should be done in an emergency.

Support, reassurance and maintaining dignity are essential before, during and after the seizure.

First Aid for tonic-clonic seizures

1. When the seizure starts:

- note the time
- clear a space around the person
- cushion their head to prevent head and facial injury
- loosen tight neckwear, belts etc and remove spectacles
- turn on side if possible, to keep airways clear
- loosen chest and leg restraints on wheelchairs
- reassure others and explain what you are doing.

2. During the seizure **DO NOT**:

- restrain or restrict movements
- put anything in the mouth or try to remove dentures unless blocking airway
- give drinks or medication
- move the person unless they are in danger, e.g. in water, close to fire.

3. When the movements have stopped:

- make the person comfortable on their side
- ensure airways are clear – wipe away any excess saliva from the mouth and check that vomit or dentures are not blocking the throat
- place something soft, e.g. a cushion, folded jacket behind the person to prevent them rolling onto their back
- when consciousness returns, reassure the person and tell them what has happened
- check for signs of injury and apply first aid if necessary
- observe the person and stay with them until recovery is complete
- provide privacy and offer assistance especially if the person has lost control of their bladder/bowel
- make a record of the seizure.

First Aid for other types of seizures

1. Tonic, Atonic and Myoclonic seizures

- check for injury, give first aid if needed
- stay with the person till recovered, reassure.

2. Absence seizures

- guide away from any immediate danger
- person may have missed important information – check.

3. Simple Partial (focal) seizures

- guide away from any immediate danger
- be understanding and reassuring.

4. Complex Partial seizures

- don't restrain or try to distract the person
- gently guide away from any immediate danger
- keep under observation until the person recovers.

Emergency situations - When to get medical help:

CALL 999 if:

- it is the person's first known seizure
- the seizure lasts more than 5 minutes
- a tonic clonic seizure follows another without full recovery in between
- the person does not regain consciousness
- you suspect the person has been injured
- you are concerned about the person's colour/breathing
- the person is unusually confused and disorientated for a sustained period after the seizure
- the person may have inhaled water.

The Recovery Position

Do not use this method if you think that the unconscious person may have damage to the neck, back or any part of the spine.

1

First make sure that the unconscious person can breathe. Gently tilt the head back before placing the unconscious person into the 'recovery position' as shown in the pictures.



2

Roll person over onto side, bending leg at right angles to the body.



3

Adjust leg and hand position.



4

Final position. Stay with the person until they have recovered.



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