

Seizure Recognition and Response

What they look like and what you should do

Seizure Type	What It Looks Like	Sometimes Mistaken for	What to Do	What Not to Do
Tonic-Clonic Seizure <i>Also called a convulsive seizure; previously called grand mal</i>	<p>The person may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cry out and fall • Lose consciousness (seems to “pass out”) • Stiffens muscles/body • Have jerking movements of arms/legs • Turn head or body to one side • Have shallow breathing or pauses in breathing • Lose bladder or bowel control <p>Seizure usually lasts 1 to 3 minutes.</p> <p>After the seizure, normal breathing resumes, may appear confused, need to sleep, or have a headache for a while. They may go to sleep for minutes or hours.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heart attack • Stroke 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay with the person and time the seizure • Stay calm, look for medical identification • Keep them safe, move or guide away from harmful objects • Turn person on one side if they are not awake and aware • Don't block airway, put something small and soft under the head, loosen tight clothes around the neck • Stay with the person until they are awake and aware after the seizure • <i>Rescue medicines that are not swallowed can be given if prescribed.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't do CPR unless they are not breathing or don't have a heartbeat • Don't put anything in the person's mouth (they can't swallow their tongue) • Don't restrain or hold the person down • Don't give the person any water, food, or pills to swallow unless fully alert
Focal Aware Seizure <i>Also called simple partial or may be called auras</i>	<p>The person may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have jerking of body, arm, leg, or face (may spread to other parts of the body) • Feel tingling, numbness, or other feelings in part of the body • See, smell, taste, or hear things that aren't there • Think about things differently than usual • Feel scared, sad, angry, or happy for no reason • Feel like vomiting (throwing up) or have a stomach ache <p>Seizure usually lasts 1 to 3 minutes.</p> <p>During the seizure, the person usually stays aware and knows what's going on. Sometimes this seizure may turn into a focal seizure with impaired awareness or tonic-clonic seizure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acting out • Acting unusual • Mental illness • Mystical experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay calm • Stay with them and time the seizure • Keep them safe, move or guide away from harmful objects • Make the person as comfortable as possible • Keep onlookers away and explain to others what's happening if necessary • Stay with the person until the seizure is over • Be sensitive and supportive and ask others to do the same 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't restrain or grab the person • Don't assume the person can hear you or will follow instructions • Don't shout
Atonic Seizure <i>Also called drop attacks</i>	<p>The person may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fall or parts or all of the body may become limp • Lose consciousness (seem to “pass out”) <p>Seizure usually lasts 10 to 60 seconds</p> <p>After the seizure, the person:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Becomes fully conscious (awake) • May feel weak or need help at first 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fainting • Clumsiness • Poor walking skills, in children • Being drunk, in adults 	<p>Prevent person from hitting objects or banging head if possible. If person is sitting, support them to prevent falling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check for injuries • Reassure person they are okay • Stay with them until they are awake and alert and resume usual activity 	
Clonic Seizure	<p>The person may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have jerking movements alone or after stiffening of muscles <p>May last a few seconds to 1 - 2 minutes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clumsiness • Movement problems 	<p>Give general first aid</p>	
Tonic Seizure	<p>The person may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have tension and stiffening in the body, arms, and legs • Fall if standing • Have small changes in awareness <p>Usually lasts less than 20 seconds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Falls • Movement or sleep problems 	<p>Prevent person from hitting objects or banging head if possible.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If person is sitting, support them to prevent falling • Check for injuries • Resassure person they are okay • Stay with them until they are awake and alert and resume usual activity 	
Myoclonic Seizure	<p>The person may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have brief jerking movements of the whole body or parts of the body • Spill or drop objects • May fall <p>May not be aware of what happened, others may not notice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clumsiness 	<p>Give general first aid</p>	
Absence Seizure <i>Previously called petit mal</i> <small>Most common in children</small>	<p>The person may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stare blankly, not aware of what is going on • Blink quickly • Make chewing movements <p>Seizure can last up to 20 seconds</p> <p>After the seizure, the person may be awake and aware right away, but doesn't know what happened.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daydreaming • Not paying attention • Ignoring instructions 	<p>For a single absence seizure, reassure them they are okay. No other first aid is needed.</p> <p>For clusters or groups of absence seizures, the person may look confused for minutes or hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give general first aid for a seizure with altered awareness • Time the cluster and get help if it lasts longer than usual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't assume the person can hear you or will follow instructions • Don't shout
Focal Impaired Awareness Seizure <i>Also called complex partial, focal, psycho-motor, or temporal lobe</i>	<p>The person may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stare blankly and is unaware or confused about what is going on • Turn head and eyes to one side • Make chewing movements, lick lips, or rub their hands • Repeatedly pick at objects, clothes, dress or undress • Move their body in unusual ways • Mumble, continue talking, or not talk at all • Run or seem scared <p>Seizure usually lasts 1 to 3 minutes.</p> <p>After the seizure, they may be confused, not remember what happened.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being drunk or on drugs • Mental illness • Acting out 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give general first aid for a seizure with altered awareness • Stay with them and time the seizure • Keep them safe, move or guide away from harmful objects • Keep person in an enclosed area if possible • If they are on the ground or lose consciousness, turn them on one side • Keep onlookers away and explain what is happening • Speak calmly, telling them they are safe • Be sensitive and supportive, and ask others to do the same 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't restrain or grab the person • Don't assume the person can hear you or will follow instructions • Don't shout
Infantile Spasms <small>Happens in babies, typically between 3 months and 24 months old.</small>	<p>The child may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move suddenly as if they were startled • Have their head and arms fall forward if sitting up • Have their knees fold up and arms and head lift if lying down 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asking to be picked up • Colic • Normal baby movements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep baby in a safe place • No special action is needed, watch for clusters of too many seizures at once • Tell parents what happened • Take the baby to the doctor or emergency room if this is the first time a seizure happened 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't shake the baby