

Epilepsy and Seizure First Aid for Seniors

Epilepsy is a chronic neurological disorder that causes a person to have 2 or more recurrent, unprovoked seizures in their lifetime.

Types of seizures most common in seniors

A seizure occurs when there is brief excessive electrical activity in the brain. Among the older population common causes of seizures include: stroke, Alzheimer’s disease, brain tumors, head injuries and infections. **Epilepsy is actually more common in persons 65 and older than any other age group yet it’s not diagnosed as often as it should be. Epilepsy might be missed if you are not trained to recognize seizures and may not be aware they are happening. A caregiver or family member may think what’s being experienced is a symptom of another medical condition or side effects from medication.** While there are more than 20 different kinds of seizures the most common seen in seniors are simple partial and complex partial seizures.

Generalized (affects the whole brain)		Partial (affects part of the brain)	
Absence	Tonic Clonic	Simple Partial	Complex Partial
Characterized by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blank dazed stare Sometimes blinking and chewing motion Lasts a few seconds 	Characterized by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loss of consciousness Muscle rigidity Convulsions Lasts 1-3 mins 	Characterized by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full consciousness Jerking of one part of the body Sensory experiences Possible feeling of fear or insecurity 	Characterized by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Altered consciousness Being out of touch with surroundings Random and purposeless activities which may include picking at clothing and/or aimless walking Lasts 1 -3 mins
What to do: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No First Aid needed Document in Seizure Observation record 	What to do: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Turn person on side Remove objects/glasses Use something soft under head Stay calm & stay with the person Time seizure 	What to do: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No First Aid needed 	What to do: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay calm and reassure others Track time Check for medical I.D. Do not restrain Gently direct away from hazards Stay until they are fully alert and aware If seizure lasts 5 minutes or another seizure begins before full consciousness is achieved, follow the emergency protocol

A seizure is an emergency if:

- It is a first time seizure
- A convulsive seizure lasts more than 5 minutes
- Repeated seizures without regaining consciousness
- More seizures than usual or change in type
- Person is injured, has diabetes or is pregnant
- Seizure occurs in water
- Normal breathing does not resume
- Parents request emergency evaluation

Epilepsy and medication

- Whenever people take more than one medication, they have to be careful about the ways the medications affect each other.
- Doctors and pharmacists need to know about every single drug a person takes. That includes anything you can buy at a store on your own like vitamins and supplements.
- The person needs to take the pills at the same times every day.
- An extra pill right before a seizure will not prevent it from happening.
- One should not stop taking pills suddenly.