

FIRST AID FOR SEIZURES

Recognizing Common Seizures

- **Simple partial seizures:** Normal awareness with isolated twitching, numbness, sweating, dizziness or nausea; disturbances to hearing, vision, smell or taste.
- **Complex partial seizures:** Staring, motionless, picking at clothes, smacking lips, swallowing repeatedly or wandering around. They are not aware of their surroundings or of what they are doing.
- **Atonic seizures:** Sudden loss of muscle tone with falling to the ground. Recovery is quick.
- **Myoclonic seizures:** Brief forceful jerks which can affect the whole body or just part of it. The jerking could be severe enough to make the person fall.
- **Absence seizures:** May appear to be daydreaming or “spacing out”. They are momentarily unconscious and totally unaware of what is happening around them.
- **Tonic-Clonic Seizures.** Sudden loss of consciousness; body stiffening, and unprotected falling to the ground. This is followed by jerking movements. A blue tinge around the mouth is likely but lack of oxygen is rare since breathing is forceful. Loss of bladder and/or bowel control *may* occur. After one or two minutes the jerking movements usually stop and consciousness slowly returns.

Many seizure types, such as absence or complex partial seizures, which involve relatively brief episodes of unresponsiveness, do not require any specific first-aid measures.

What to Do If You Witness a Seizure:

1. Stay calm
2. Prevent injury. Move objects away that the person might hit while jerking uncontrollably.
3. Pay attention to the length of the seizure by looking at your watch when it starts and ends.
4. Make the person as comfortable as possible.
5. Keep onlookers away.
6. Do not hold the person down. If the person having a seizure thrashes around there is no need for you to restrain them. They are more likely to be combative if restrained. Remember to consider your safety as well.
7. Place something soft under their head.
8. Loosen tight neckwear.
9. Turn him or her gently onto one side. This will help keep the airway clear.
10. Do not put anything in their mouth. Contrary to popular belief; a person having a seizure cannot swallow their tongue. Efforts to hold the tongue down can injure their teeth, jaw, or your fingers.
11. Do not give the person water, pills, or food until fully alert.
12. Be sensitive and supportive, and ask others to do the same.
13. If the jerking seizure activity does not stop after 5 or 10 minutes then call the rescue squad. If the person awakens and returns to normal, then there is no need to call the rescue squad or take them to a hospital.