

General First Aid for All Seizure Types

The most important thing is to keep the person safe and comfortable. For most seizures, giving basic seizure first aid is all you need to do. The information on this page is for all types of seizures.

What should I do when someone has a seizure?

- Always stay with the person until the seizure is over.
- Pay attention to how long the seizure lasts.
- Stay calm. Most seizures only last a few minutes.
- Prevent injury by moving nearby objects out of the way.
- Make the person as comfortable as possible.
- Keep onlookers away.
- Don't hold the person down.
- Don't put anything in the person's mouth.
- Don't give water, pills or food by mouth unless the person is fully alert.
- Make sure their breathing is okay.
- Know when to call for emergency medical help.
- Be sensitive and supportive, and ask others to do the same.

Always stay with the person until the seizure is over.

Seizures can be unpredictable. It's hard to tell how long they will last or what will happen during them. Some may start with minor symptoms, and then lead to a fall or a loss of consciousness. Other seizures may end in just a few seconds. If the person is injured during or after a seizure, they may need help.

228 **Pay attention to how long the seizure lasts.**

239 Look at your watch and time the seizure. Keep track of:

- 254 • How much time there is between the beginning and the end of the active seizure
- 270 • How long it takes for the person to recover and return to their usual activity level

289 If the active seizure lasts longer than usual for that person, call for help. Know when to give “as
302 needed” (or rescue treatments), if prescribed — and when to call for emergency help.

311 **Stay calm. Most seizures only last a few minutes.**

329 Your response can affect how other people act. If you stay calm, it will help others stay calm,
347 too. Talk calmly and be reassuring to the person during and after the seizure. This will help them
352 feel better as they recover.

362 **Prevent injury by moving nearby objects out of the way.**

378 Remove sharp objects from around the person, if you can. If the person is wandering or
392 confused, help steer them away from dangerous situations. For example, keep them away from
406 traffic, the edge of a train or subway platform, high places, and sharp objects.

413 **Make the person as comfortable as possible.**

435 Help them sit down in a safe place. If they are at risk of falling, get someone to help you and lay
452 the person down on the floor. Support the person’s head to keep it from hitting the floor.

455 **Keep onlookers away.**

471 Once the situation is under control, encourage people to step back and give the person some
488 room. Waking up in a crowd can be embarrassing and confusing for a person after a seizure.
499 Ask someone to stay nearby in case you need more help.

504 **Don't hold the person down.**

519 Stopping the person's movements won't stop the seizure. It can cause injuries and make the
533 person more confused, agitated, or aggressive. People don't fight on purpose during a seizure.
550 But if they are restrained when they are confused, they may react aggressively. If a person tries
563 to walk around, let them walk in a safe, enclosed area if possible.

570 **Don't put anything in the person's mouth.**

589 A person may bite down during a seizure if their jaw and face muscles tighten. If something is in
602 their mouth, they could break and swallow the object, or break their teeth!

617 Remember, a person can't swallow their tongue during a seizure. So don't worry about that.

623 **Make sure their breathing is okay.**

642 If the person is lying down, turn them on their side, with their mouth pointing to the ground. This
654 helps them breathe more easily and keeps saliva from blocking their airway.

670 During a convulsive (or tonic-clonic) seizure, it may look like the person has stopped breathing.
689 This happens when the chest muscles tighten during the tonic phase of a seizure. As this part of a
705 seizure ends, the muscles will relax and the person will start breathing normally again. You don't
719 need to do rescue breathing or CPR for that kind of change in breathing.

733 **Don't give water, pills, or food by mouth unless the person is fully alert.**

752 If a person is not fully awake or aware of what is going on, they might not swallow correctly.

769 Food, liquid, or pills could go into their lungs instead of their stomach and make them choke.

785 If the person appears to be choking, turn them on their side and call for help.

790 Call 911 right away if:

- 801 • The person can't cough and clear their airway on their own
- 807 • The person is having trouble breathing

815 **Know when to call for emergency medical help.**

820 **Call 911 for help if:**

- 827 • A seizure lasts 5 minutes or longer
- 838 • One seizure happens right after another without the person regaining consciousness
842 (“coming to”) between seizures
- 851 • Seizures happen closer together than usual for that person
- 856 • The person has trouble breathing
- 862 • The person appears to be choking
- 873 • The seizure happens in water, like a swimming pool or bathtub
- 879 • The person is injured during the seizure
- 890 • You believe this is the first seizure the person has had
- 896 • The person asks for medical help

907 **Be sensitive and supportive, and ask others to do the same.**

925 Seizures can be frightening for the person having one, as well as for others. Someone who has a
941 seizure may feel embarrassed or confused about what happened. Keep this in mind as the person
943 wakes up.

- 950 • Reassure the person that they are safe.
- 965 • Once they are alert and able to communicate, tell them what happened in very simple
966 terms.
- 983 • Offer to stay with them until they are ready to go back to normal activity. Or call
990 someone else who can stay with them.