



## Seizures (Critical Risk)

Seizures are symptoms of a brain problem. They happen because of sudden, abnormal electrical activity in the brain. When people think of seizures, they often think of convulsions in which a person's body shakes rapidly and uncontrollably. Not all seizures cause convulsions. There are many types of seizures and some have mild or moderate symptoms. Seizures fall into two main groups. Focal seizures, also called partial seizures, happen in just one part of the brain. Generalized seizures are a result of abnormal activity on both sides of the brain.

Most seizures last from 30 seconds to 2 minutes and do not cause lasting harm. However, it is a **medical emergency if seizures last longer than 5 minutes or if a person has many seizures in a row. Call 911 or follow the orders from a health care provider.**

Individuals with a known seizure disorder that is fairly well controlled with medications (anticonvulsants) and/or treatments but the person has additional risk factors due to other health issues are considered to be at a **High/Critical Risk.**

### Risks for seizures include but are not limited to:

- Medicines and medicine changes
- High fevers
- Head injuries and certain diseases such as cerebral palsy and diabetes (low blood sugar episodes)
- People who have had past seizures or recurring seizures due to a brain disorder called epilepsy.

*(NIH: National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke)*

### Symptoms of a seizure/epilepsy include but are not limited to:

- Unusual sensations, emotions and behaviors
- Twitching or muscle spasms in one or more parts of the body but not all of the body
- Staring in to space
- Convulsions (full body involvement)
- Loss of consciousness (blacking out)
- Loss of bowel and bladder function

The period following a seizure is called the **postictal state**. During this time, a person may be confused and tired, and may develop a throbbing headache. Add what to do during this phase to your **Seizure Plan**

### Risks associated with seizures include but are not limited to:

- Falls and other injuries
- Choking and other respiratory problems
- Status epilepticus: a prolonged seizure or multiple seizures in a row that can lead to death.
- Loss of oxygen to the brain and other organs (Anoxia)
- Drowning

\*Prolonged seizures are can be harmful. Many other body systems can be involved, especially if the seizure includes generalized tonic-clonic activity. Body metabolism can be altered, heart rhythms can change, and even breathing can be effected. The most important step in treating status is to recognize that it's a true medical emergency.

**Prolonged seizures or seizures that happen in succession are a true Medical Emergency!  
Call 911 right away!**

**Recommendations:** Awareness of risk is important. Be alert to medication, health and environmental changes that might trigger or activate the underlying seizure disorder. You should consider the following when preparing the individual's care plan.

- Developing a comprehensive Seizure Plan with the health care provider (Neurologist)
- Assisting the individual to make and attend regular appointments with their health care provider.
- Recording all seizures, their duration and any triggers on a tracker and provide the tracker to the Neurologist at each visit.
- Knowing the correct way to respond to the individual's seizures by reading the Seizure Protocol.
- Assuring all support personal is competent in providing Seizure First Aid and CRP.
- Modifying the environment for safety and keeping the person in line of sight at all times.
- Using video equipment for night time monitoring.
- Giving all medication as prescribed and observing the individual for side effects and reporting these signs to the health care provider.
- Being alert and prepared for seizure activity should it occur.
- Understanding your role in keeping the person safe and how to provide care.
- Obtaining emergency help when needed.
- Remaining calm and observant during and after the symptoms start and end.
- Assuring all lab work is drawn as prescribed.
- Making and attending appointments with a health care provider specializing in seizure disorders such as a Neurologist as recommended.
- Identifying and avoiding triggers that have caused seizures in the past.
- Avoiding high risk sports and discussing engaging in other strenuous activities with your health care provider.
- Having a buddy that remains with you when you are in or near water and discuss if swimming is a safe activity with your health care provider.

**\*In addition it is recommended that you contact a Registered Nurse Care Consultant after developing your plan of care for technical assistance and support. Call DBHDS Health Supports Network at 804-786-1746.**

Please visit the website below for more information on Seizure First Aid:

<http://www.epilepsy.com/learn/treating-seizures-and-epilepsy/seizure-first-aid>.

References:

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