
What is a seizure?

A seizure is caused by an abnormal discharge of electrical activity in the brain. Seizures can happen with many health conditions. They may cause your child to:

- Fall.
- Have muscle spasms they cannot control.
- Make repeated chewing and clapping movements.
- Have lip smacking.
- Not respond when you talk or tell them what to do.
- Drool.
- Lose control of their bladder or bowel.
- Be confused and have altered awareness (not know who they are, where they are, or what happened).

What should I do if my child has a seizure?

During a seizure:

- Keep calm, and stay with your child.
- Help them lay on the floor.
- Put something soft and flat under their head.
- Turn them on their side. This is so they do not choke on saliva (spit) or vomit.
- Loosen any tight clothing, especially any clothing around your child's neck.
- Do not put anything in their mouth.
- Move hot and sharp objects away from them.
- Do not try to restrain them or hold them in place.
- Watch what time the seizure starts and stops.

After a seizure:

- Your child may fall asleep. This is called the postictal (post-IC-tal) phase.
- Do not give your child any food or drinks until they are awake and alert.
- Call the doctor if your child:
 - Has a different type of seizure than normal.
 - Has more seizures than normal.
 - Does not return to their normal within 30 minutes.

Call 911 right away if your child stops breathing or turns blue.

If a seizure lasts longer than 5 minutes, call 911 (or follow your child's doctor's instructions). Ask the doctor if your child needs any medicine for emergency use.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Seizures, continued

What should I watch for and write down?

Watch for and write down these things in a seizure diary:

- How long was the seizure? Look at a clock when the seizure starts and when it stops.
- What happened during the seizure? What body parts were involved? How did it start? What did it look like at first and then later?
- What happened before the seizure? Did your child have behavior changes, crying, repeated movements or confusion?
- Did your child's color or breathing change? If they stopped breathing, how long did it last?

Remember to take the seizure diary with you when you take your child to the doctor.

What should I know about my child's medicines?

- Seizures can be controlled, but not cured, by medicine.
- Do not let your child stop taking medicines without talking with the doctor first.
- Ask your child's doctor what medicine side effects to look for and what to do about them.
- Your child may need blood tests to check medicine levels. Keep all of your child's visits.
- Tell the doctor about all of your child's medicines. Some medicines do not mix well with others. Ask which medicines to avoid.

What should I know about my child's activities?

- Talk about your child's activities with the doctor. What your child may or may not do depends on:
 - The type of seizures they have.
 - How often and how bad the seizures are.
 - How your child does with medicine or therapy.
 - How long the seizures have been controlled.
- Let your child do normal activities as much as possible.
- Teach their teachers, camp counselors, coaches and any caretakers about how to care for your child if they have a seizure.
- Have your child wear safety gear, such as helmets to help prevent head injuries, as advised.
- Avoid activities that involve heights, such as climbing trees or getting on a roof.
- Your child should never bike or swim without an adult watching them, even if the doctor approves the activity.
- Watch young children at all times when they take a bath. Older children should take showers.
- Talk with the doctor before your child starts driving.

Where can I learn more?

Visit choa.org/epilepsy for a list of online resources.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Seizures, continued

You can also scan the QR code below to watch a short video about what to do when someone has a seizure.

Seizure First Aid

Epilepsy Foundation



Children's Healthcare of Atlanta has not reviewed all of the sites listed as resources and does not make any representations regarding their content or accuracy. Children's Healthcare of Atlanta does not recommend or endorse any particular products, services or the content or use of any third party websites, or make any determination that such products, services or websites are necessary or appropriate for you or for the use in rendering care to patients. Children's Healthcare of Atlanta is not responsible for the content of any of the above-referenced sites or any sites linked to these Sites. Use of the links provided on this or other sites is at your sole risk.

This teaching sheet contains general information only. Talk with your child's doctor or a member of your child's healthcare team about specific care of your child.

In case of an urgent concern or emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.