

# First Aid for Seizures

## Tonic-Clonic seizures

The person goes stiff, loses consciousness and then falls to the ground. This is followed by jerking movements. A blue tinge around the mouth is likely. This is due to irregular breathing. Loss of bladder and/or bowel control may happen. After a minute or two the jerking movements should stop and consciousness may slowly return.

### Do...

- Protect the person from injury - (remove harmful objects from nearby)
- Cushion their head
- Look for an epilepsy identity card or identity jewellery
- Aid breathing by gently placing them in the recovery position once the seizure has finished (see pictures)
- Stay with the person until recovery is complete
- Be calmly reassuring



### Don't...

- Restrain the person's movements
- Put anything in the person's mouth
- Try to move them unless they are in danger
- Give them anything to eat or drink until they are fully recovered
- Attempt to bring them round



### Call for an ambulance if...

- You know it is the person's first seizure, or
- The seizure continues for more than five minutes, or
- One tonic-clonic seizure follows another without the person regaining consciousness between seizures, or
- The person is injured during the seizure, or
- You believe the person needs urgent medical attention



Remember:

#### Assess

Assess the situation – are they in danger of injuring themselves? Remove any nearby objects that could cause injury

#### Cushion

Cushion their head (with a jumper, for example) to protect them from head injury

#### Time

Check the time – if the seizure lasts longer than five minutes you should call an ambulance

#### Identity

Look for a medical bracelet or ID card – it may give you information about the person's seizures and what to do

#### Over

Once the seizure is over, put them on their side (in the recovery position – see illustration). Stay with them and reassure them as they come round

#### Never

Never restrain the person, put something in their mouth or try to give them food or drink

## **Focal (partial) seizures**

Sometimes the person may not be aware of their surroundings or what they are doing. They may pluck at their clothes, smack their lips, swallow repeatedly, and wander around.

### **Do...**

- Guide the person from danger
- Stay with the person until recovery is complete
- Be calmly reassuring
- Explain anything that they may have missed

### **Don't...**

- Restrain the person
- Act in a way that could frighten them, such as making abrupt movements or shouting at them
- Assume the person is aware of what is happening, or what has happened
- Give the person anything to eat or drink until they are fully recovered
- Attempt to bring them round

### **Call for an ambulance if...**

- You know it is the person's first seizure
- The seizure continues for more than five minutes
- The person is injured during the seizure
- You believe the person needs urgent medical attention

## **First aid for people who use a wheelchair**

If you use a wheelchair, or you have other mobility problems, speak to your GP or epilepsy specialist. They should give you a care plan, which includes advice on how people should help you if you have a seizure.

Here are some general first aid guidelines for people who have a seizure in a wheelchair.

### **Do...**

- Put the brakes on, to stop the chair from moving
- Allow the person to remain seated in the chair during the seizure (unless they have a care plan which says to move them). Moving the person could possibly lead to injuries for the person having the seizure and the carer
- If the person has a seatbelt or harness on, leave it fastened
- If the person doesn't have a seatbelt or harness, support them gently, so they don't fall out of the chair
- Cushion the person's head and support it gently. A head rest, cushion or rolled up coat can be helpful

The person's care plan should give advice on what to do after the seizure has finished. For example, whether it is safe to move the person from the chair to put them in the recovery position.

### **Don't...**

- Restrain the person's movements
- Put anything in the person's mouth
- Give them anything to eat or drink until they are fully recovered
- Attempt to bring them round