



Seizure First Aid

It is likely you already know your child has had a seizure (SEE-zhur). There are many kinds of seizures. Here is first aid for some of the most common types.

What is a seizure?

A seizure is a sudden release of energy (electrical discharge) by the brain. Seizures can cause changes in how your child acts. Some seizures cause a blank stare. Other seizures can cause your child to pass out and to stiffen or jerk their arms and legs.

What is an absence seizure?

Absence seizures are short staring spells or quick moments when your child looks like they are not paying attention. They do not last long. It can be hard to tell if your child is having a seizure or staring into space thinking hard about something.

What should I do if my child has an absence seizure?

- Your child may need to hear instructions more than one time.
- If you know your child has absence seizures, it is important to tell your child's teachers at school.
- Check to see if your child is blinking their eyes, chewing or if they have any other movements while they are staring.
- See if the seizure stops by touching your child or calling their name.
- If the seizure lasts more than 5 minutes, then this is an emergency. Call 911. Have your child taken to the hospital.

What should I do after the absence seizure?

- Comfort your child. Let your child know where they are and what is going on. Call your child's doctor or healthcare provider.

What is a tonic-clonic seizure?

Tonic-clonic (TAW-nik CLAW-nik) seizures cause a child's body to jerk. Your child may pass out (become unconscious). They may have a hard time breathing and may look pale or blue. Your child may wet their pants or have a bowel movement. They may have more spit (saliva) in their mouth than usual.



What should I do if my child has a tonic-clonic seizure?

- Stay calm.
- Look at the time that the seizure started so you know how long the seizure lasts.
- Make sure your child is safe. Move toys and furniture out of the way. Put your child on their side on the bed or floor. Put something under your child's head like a sweater or jacket. Stay with your child.
- Do not try to hold your child still. You cannot stop the seizure.
- Loosen any tight clothing around your child's neck.
- Take off your child's eyeglasses if your child wears them.
- Clear the area of hard and sharp objects.
- Don't worry if there is extra spit in your child's mouth.
- Your child may urinate or have a bowel movement during a seizure. They cannot control this during a seizure.
- Do not put anything in your child's mouth or between their teeth. Your child will not swallow their tongue. You cannot stop your child from biting their tongue.
- If the seizure lasts more than 5 minutes, then this is an emergency. Call 911. Have your child taken to the hospital.

What should I do after the tonic-clonic seizure?

- Your child will probably want you to comfort them.
- Your child may be confused, tired and want to sleep.
- If your child wet their pants or had a bowel movement during the seizure, help your child get clean. Tell your child that you know they could not help it.
- Call your child's doctor or healthcare provider.
- If your child has a seizure disorder and continues having regular seizures, your doctor may need to start your child on medicine or change your child's medicine.

Focal seizures with impaired awareness are also called:

- Focal seizures with dyscognitive features
- Complex partial seizures.

What is a focal seizure with impaired awareness?

- A child may have a focal seizure with impaired awareness while they are sitting, standing or walking. They may act in any or all of the ways listed below. Your child might:
- Have a blank or glassy stare.
- Not respond or seem confused if you ask them a question.
- Smack their lips or make or chewing motions.
- Fidget with their clothes.
- Look drunk, drugged or confused.

To Learn More

- Neurology
206-987-2078
- After hours and on weekends (hospital operator)
206-987-2000
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- www.seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

What should I do if my child has a focal seizure with impaired awareness?

- Be calm. Stay with your child during the seizure.
- Do not try to hold your child still, except to keep them safe.
- Check the time. You will need to know how long the seizure lasts.
- If your child appears angry, it is best not to talk or argue with them until after the seizure.
- If the seizure lasts more than 5 minutes, then this is an emergency. Call 911. Have your child taken to the hospital.

What should I do after a focal seizure with impaired awareness?

- Comfort your child. Let your child know where they are and what is going on. Call your child's doctor or healthcare provider.

Where can I learn more?

You can find more information and a helpful chart (page 8) on seizure first aid in the Epilepsy Foundation booklet "Seizure Recognition and First Aid" on www.epilepsynw.org/wp-content/themes/epilepsy/brochures/First-Aid-and-Seizure-Response/Seizure-Recognition-and-First-Aid.pdf