



Seizure First Aid

There are three main kinds of seizures. Here are the ways to respond to each kind.

It is likely you already know your child has a seizure (SEE-zhur) disorder. There are many kinds of seizures. Here are three main types and first aid for each.

What is a seizure?

A seizure is a sudden release of energy (electrical discharge) by the brain. It 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 is 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 a absence seizure?

- Your child may need to hear instructions more than once.
- If you know your child has absence seizures, it is important to tell school teachers.
- 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 child's name
- If the seizure lasts more than 5 minutes, then this is an emergency. Call 911. Have your child taken to the hospital.
- Call your child's doctor or health care 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.



- Do not try to hold your child still. You cannot stop the seizure.
- Loosen tight clothing around the neck.
- Take off your child's eyeglasses if your child wears them.
- Clear the area of hard and sharp objects.
- 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.
- Don't worry if there is extra spit in your child's mouth.
- Comfort your child when the seizure is over. Your child may be confused or tired after a seizure.
- Your child may urinate or have a bowel movement during a seizure. They cannot control this during a seizure.

What happens after the tonic-clonic seizure?

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

What is a complex partial seizure?

A child may have a complex partial seizure while they are sitting, standing or walking. They may act in any or all of the following ways:

- Have a blank or glassy stare.
- If you ask them a question, they do not respond or they seem confused.
- Smack their lips or make or chewing motions.
- Fidget with their clothes.
- Look drunk, drugged or confused.

What should I do if my child has a complex partial seizure?

- Be calm.
- 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.

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

- If the seizure lasts more than 5 minutes, then this is an emergency. Call 911. Have your child taken to the hospital.
- Stay with your child during the seizure.
- If your child appears angry, it is best not to talk or argue with them until after the seizure.

What happens after the complex partial seizure?

- Be comforting. Let your child know where they are and what is going on. Call your child's doctor or health care provider.

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.
- For Deaf and hard of hearing callers
206-987-2280 (TTY)

Seattle Children's offers interpreter services for Deaf, hard of hearing or non-English speaking patients, family members and legal representatives free of charge. Seattle Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Call the Family Resource Center at 206-987-2201.

This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Seattle Children's. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's healthcare provider.

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