

# Seizure First Aid

## How to care for your child if they have a seizure

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### What do I do when my child has a seizure?

Most seizures are not medical emergencies, so the most important thing you can do is give your child basic first aid. Try your best to stay as calm as possible. This helps you keep track of the time and give first aid.

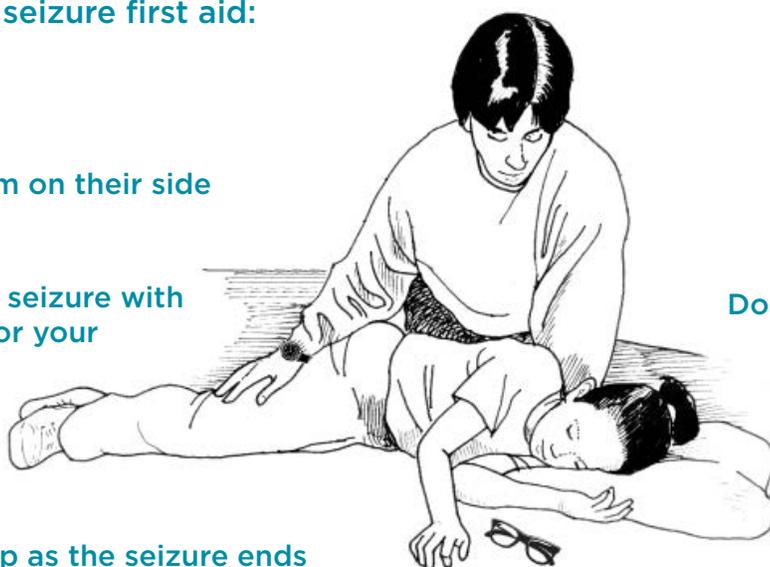
**If the seizure lasts more than 5 minutes, it is an emergency. Call 911. Have your child taken to the hospital.**

### To give basic seizure first aid:

Turn them on their side

Time the seizure with a watch or your phone

Offer help as the seizure ends



Do not hold them down

Cushion their head

Remove glasses and loosen tight clothing

### What about different types of seizures?

All seizures are 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. The different kinds of seizures include absence, tonic-clonic and focal seizures. Depending on the type your child has, caring for your child before and after the seizure may vary.

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#### To Learn More

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

#### Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your 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.

### 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. If you know your child has absence seizures, it is important to tell your child's teachers at school.

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

In addition to basic seizure first aid:

- Check to see if your child is blinking their eyes or 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.
- Your child may need to hear instructions more than one time.

#### **What should I do after an absence seizure?**

- Comfort your child. Let your child know where they are and what is going on.
  - Contact your child's doctor or healthcare provider.
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### Tonic-clonic seizure

Tonic-clonic 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?**

In addition to basic seizure first aid:

- 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.

#### **What should I do after a 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.
- Contact 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 seizure with impaired awareness

Also called focal seizure with dyscognitive features or complex partial seizure

These seizures can happen while your child is sitting, standing or walking. They may act in any or all of these ways:

- 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

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

In addition to basic seizure first aid:

- Do not try to hold your child still, except to keep them safe.
- If your child appears angry, it is best not to talk or argue with them until after the seizure.

#### **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.
- Contact your child's doctor or healthcare provider.

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### Where can I learn more?

You can find more information, including a seizure first aid app, posters and videos at Epilepsy Foundation — First Aid Resources.

[epilepsy.com/learn/seizure-first-aid-and-safety/adapting-first-aid-plans/first-aid/first-aid-resources](https://www.epilepsy.com/learn/seizure-first-aid-and-safety/adapting-first-aid-plans/first-aid/first-aid-resources)