First Aid for Seizures

First aid for seizures involves responding in ways that can keep the person safe until the seizure stops by itself. Here are a few things you can do to help someone who is having a generalized tonic-clonic (grand mal) seizure:

- Keep calm and reassure other people who may be nearby.
- Prevent injury by clearing the area around the person of anything hard or sharp.
- Ease the person to the floor and put something soft and flat, like a folded jacket, under his head.
- Remove eyeglasses and loosen ties or anything around the neck that may make breathing difficult.
- Time the seizure with your watch. If the seizure continues for longer than five minutes without signs of slowing down or if a person has trouble breathing afterwards, appears to be injured, in pain, or recovery is unusual in some way, call 911.
- Do not hold the person down or try to stop his movements.
- Contrary to popular belief, it is not true that a person having a seizure can swallow his tongue. **Do not** put anything in the person’s mouth. Efforts to hold the tongue down can injure the teeth or jaw.
- Turn the person gently onto one side. This will help keep the airway clear.
- Don’t attempt artificial respiration except in the unlikely event that a person does not start breathing again after the seizure has stopped.
- Stay with the person until the seizure ends naturally and he is fully awake.
- Do not offer the person water or food until fully alert.
- Be friendly and reassuring as consciousness returns.
- Offer to call a taxi, friend or relative to help the person get home if he seems confused or unable to get home without help.

Here are a few things you can do to help someone who is having a seizure that appears as blank staring, loss of awareness, and/or involuntary blinking, chewing, or other facial movements.

- Stay calm and speak reassuringly.
- Guide him away from dangers.
- Block access to hazards, but don’t restrain the person.
- If he is agitated, stay a distance away, but close enough to protect him until full awareness has returned.

Consider a seizure an emergency and call 911 if any of the following occurs:

- The seizure lasts longer than five minutes without signs of slowing down or if a person has
trouble breathing afterwards, appears to be in pain or recovery is unusual in some way.
- The person has another seizure soon after the first one.
- The person cannot be awakened after the seizure activity has stopped.
- The person became injured during the seizure.
- The person becomes aggressive.
- The seizure occurs in water.
- The person has a health condition like diabetes or heart disease or is pregnant.

Related Links

- Epilepsy Foundation First Aid (http://www.epilepsyfoundation.org/aboutepilepsy/index.cfm/firstaid/) (http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html)
- Newsroom (http://www.epilepsyfoundation.org/resources/Epilepsy-In-The-News.cfm) (http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html)
- eCommunities (http://epilepsyfoundation.ning.com/) (http://www.cdc.gov/Other/disclaimer.html)
- For links to other epilepsy organizations and educational resources, see Resources (/epilepsy/resources.htm)