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WHAT TO DO WHEN SOMEONE HAS A SEIZURE

Knowing what to do – and what not to do – when someone has a seizure is vital.

Help required during seizures depends on:

- the type and pattern of seizure
- how long the seizure lasts and how severe it is
- how the seizure affects the person's consciousness.

Some seizures are brief. Most are self-righting. Some seizures may require basic first aid. Others may require emergency medical attention, e.g., serial seizures and status epilepticus*.

Reassurance and appropriate support are always helpful.

WHAT TO DO IF THE PERSON HAS A:

Simple partial seizure

- guide the person away from any immediate danger
- be understanding and reassuring
- if a tonic clonic seizure develops, follow the first aid directions on the next page.

Complex partial seizure

- don't restrain or try to distract the person
- gently guide them away from any immediate danger
- keep them under observation until they recover.

Absence seizure

- guide the person away from any immediate danger
- they may have missed important information – check this.

Tonic, atonic and myoclonic seizures

- check the person for injury, and give them first aid if needed – see below
- stay with the person till they have recovered, and reassure them.

Tonic clonic (major convulsive) seizure

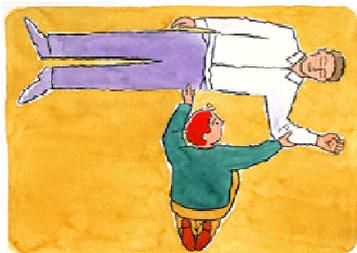
- see first aid guidance on the next page

*Status epilepticus is a condition in which seizures persist for 30 minutes or more. It can occur with **all** types of seizure, but with tonic clonic seizures it is a medical emergency requiring immediate medical treatment. If a tonic clonic seizure lasts more than 5 minutes or if a second seizure occurs before the person has recovered, call for medical help.

For a fuller description of seizure types, see leaflet 1 in this series: **'What is Epilepsy? An introduction'**

THE RECOVERY POSITION

Do not use this method if you think that the unconscious person may have damage to the neck, back or any part of the spine.



First make sure that the unconscious person can breathe. Gently tilt the head back before placing the unconscious person into the 'recovery position' as shown in the pictures.



Secondly, roll the person over onto their side, bending their leg at right angles to the body.



Thirdly, adjust leg and hand position.



Final position.

Stay with the person until they have recovered.

FIRST AID FOR TONIC CLONIC SEIZURES

DO:

- note the time the seizure starts
- clear a space, support the person's head (use a cushion, a folded coat or support the head with your hands)
- loosen any tight neckwear, belts, etc.
- remove any spectacles and keep them safe
- turn the person into the recovery position when their convulsions stop
- clear excess saliva and check their airways and breathing
- reassure the person and minimise embarrassment if incontinence has occurred.

DON'T:

- move the person unless they are in danger, *e.g.*, in water, close to fire or heights
- force any object between their teeth, or try to remove dentures (unless dislodged)
- restrain them – allow the seizure to take its course
- give them drinks, medication, or apply a wet sponge.

CALL 999 FOR MEDICAL HELP IF:

- the seizure lasts for more than 5 minutes, or 2 minutes longer than is normal for that person
- the person does not regain consciousness
- further seizure(s) follow
- the person has an injury
- the person may have inhaled water
- breathing difficulties continue
- it's the person's first seizure.

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