

# Seizure Safety and First Aid

Editor's note: For easy reading, he or she will be used alternately. Please make the pronouns fit your child.

## Keeping The Child Safe During A Seizure:

You can't stop a seizure but you can keep the child safe while it is happening. How you manage this depends on the type of seizures your child has. Whatever the type of seizure, it helps to stay calm. Breathe evenly and talk in a slow low voice to calm yourself and those around.

### 1. Generalized Tonic-Clonic Seizures:

- Cushion the fall, if you can, by supporting the child and then lying him down. Do not try to hold the child still – let the seizure run its course.
- Remember, turn the child on her side to prevent choking.
- Remove hard objects from around the child.
- Never force anything into the mouth.
- Loosen tight clothing and remove eye glasses.
- Stay with the child and allow him to rest after the seizure. Reassure

the child that you will stay and keep him safe.

- Encourage the child to go back to normal activity as soon as she feels able.

### Call For An Ambulance If:

- the seizure lasts longer than five minutes.
- the child is not breathing properly.
- the child does not regain consciousness soon after the seizure ends.

### 2. Complex-Partial Seizures:

- Stay with the child and guide her away from danger.
- Reassure the child calmly that you will stay and keep him safe.
- Don't try to hold the child still as she may struggle or fight you.
- Remain with the child and allow him to rest after the seizure.
- Encourage the child to go back to normal activity as she feels able.
- If the seizure lasts longer than five minutes, call for an ambulance.

### 3. For Simple Partial Seizures:

Allow the seizure to pass. You do not need to do anything. If the seizure lasts longer than 10-15 minutes, call your family doctor or pediatrician.

### 4. Absence Seizures:

Allow the seizure to pass. You do not need to do anything.

### If A Seizure Happens In Water:

- Support the child's head above the water.
- Take the child out of the water as quickly as you can. You may need help to do this safely.
- Once out of the water, turn the child on his side.
- Call 911 for emergency help if the seizure continues.
- Begin artificial respiration if the child is not breathing on her own.
- Take him to the doctor if there is any concern that, while choking, water/saliva may be in the lungs. (aspiration).
- Keep the child out of the water for the rest of the day.
- When she feels better, ask the child to tell you the story of what happened. This allows her to think about the event. It is a chance for you to reassure and calm fears.
- A few children have ongoing fears that interfere with sleep, and stop them doing normal activities. Talk to your family physician if you are worried about your child. There are resources to help children get over anxiety. Check in the Family Resource Library of the hospital.

## General Safety Guidelines For People Who Have Seizures:

A person who has seizures needs to be more careful about some things. But, being careful does not mean keeping the child from any activity that may have any risk. Over protection can do damage to the child's sense of self. It can prevent the child from learning many normal things. Encourage the young person to join in with most activities.

As your child becomes more independent, and is doing things outside the home, a Medi-Alert bracelet is a good idea.

## Some Safety Guidelines To Share With Family And Friends:

### In the bathroom:

- Someone should be in the house when the person takes a bath or shower. Showers are safer. But, if your child prefers to bathe, be watchful.
- A youth, who needs privacy, can close the door but leave it unlocked. Someone needs to check often that all is well.
- Use an "occupied" sign for the toilet rather than a locked door.

### **Sports And Play:**

Your child can do most things that other children do. She is safer when there is a responsible adult present for activities which may have some risks like swimming.

There are a few activities such as scuba diving or those involving heights like mountain/rock climbing, hang gliding that are clearly not safe for someone with seizures.

### **Cycling/rollerblading/ skateboarding/skiing:**

- Your child should always wear a helmet.
- Until seizures are under good control, cycle only on bicycle paths away from traffic.

### **Water sports:**

- Tell lifeguards and swimming instructors that your child has seizures.
- If there is no lifeguard, make sure your child has a swimming partner who is strong enough to keep your child's head above water and get her to safety in an emergency.
- Your child, like others, should always wear a life jacket when boating.

### **Contact sports:**

- Contact sports are no more dangerous for a child with seizures

than for others. The brain of people with seizures is usually no more likely to be injured. Your child can protect her head with the proper headgear during contact sports.

- Boxing (where head injuries are common) is not a good idea.

### **Driving:**

**Driving is often the most difficult issue that families face with youth who have seizures. These are the facts:**

- In B.C., a person who is seizure free for one year, on or off medications, may be approved for a driver's license.
- It is illegal to drive if seizures are not controlled. People with uncontrolled seizures place themselves and others at serious risk when they drive.

### **Consider The Mix:**

Be careful about mixing anticonvulsants with other herbal remedies, tonics, alcohol or other drugs (legal, illegal, "natural" or chemical). Find out what is known about the risks and interactions from the hospital pharmacist or your doctor. This will help you discuss this issue with your youth. Encourage him to make good decisions based on facts.

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