

What To Do If You See Someone Having A Seizure

Acknowledgements: *National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke*
www.ninds.nih.gov (keyword – Epilepsy)
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More than 2 million people in the United States have experienced an unprovoked seizure. Students, faculty, and staff are not immune from this possibility. Seizures are not contagious and are not caused by mental illness or mental retardation. Often, seizures occur in reaction to anesthesia or some other strong drug. Also, seizures can develop during the course of an illness with a high fever.

These experiences can be dramatic and frightening. Symptoms from a person having a seizure include:

- Falling to the floor unconscious
- An uncontrollable twitching or related movement
- Drooling or loss of bladder control

Most seizures last only a few minutes. After the seizure, the victim usually regains consciousness but is exhausted and dazed.

If you see someone who appears to be having a seizure, follow these helpful guidelines:

- **DIAL 911 IMMEDIATELY** (*Note: It is not necessary to first dial a 9 to get an outside line in this regard*). Have someone wait outside of the room and be prepared to direct emergency personnel to the exact location of the victim.
- Assist the person in lying down to the floor. Cushion his or her head (Use a jacket or other available materials). Clear a large area around the person from other people or objects.
- Loosen any tight clothing around the neck
- Ensure an open airway. If necessary, grip the person's jaw gently and tilt his or her head back.
- **DO NOT** put anything in the person's mouth. Contrary to popular belief, people cannot swallow their tongue during a seizure.
- Roll the person on his or her side to prevent choking on any fluids or vomit.
- **DO NOT** restrict the person from moving unless he or she is in danger
- Move any sharp or solid objects that the person might hit during the seizure
- Note how long the seizure last and any other symptoms that occurred during the seizure so that you can relay this information to emergency personnel when they arrive.
- Stay with the person until the seizure ends.

For more information on seizures, consult the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS) at <http://www.ninds.nih.gov>.

