

What you need to know about . . .

Seizures

- A **seizure** is a period of disturbed brain activity which can affect one or more parts of the body. Some, but not all seizures result in convulsions.
- **Status epilepticus** refers to a seizure activity lasting longer than five minutes.
- **Epilepsy** is a brain disorder characterized by recurrent seizures. It is the most common type of seizure disorder.
- A **convulsion** is a sudden, violent, involuntary movement of parts of the body, or the whole body.

These are things that make it more likely a person will have a seizure:

- A diagnosis of epilepsy
- Changing doses of, or discontinuing, seizure medications
- A history of seizures within the last five years
- Brain injuries
- Head injuries
- High, uncontrolled fever
- Blood levels of seizure medications that are too high or too low
- Choking, cardiac arrest, or another event that interrupts the flow of oxygen to the brain
- Low blood sugar, or low blood sodium
- Kidney disease or kidney failure

Know the risks

Know the signs

Sometimes people experience warning sensations before a seizure, such as:

- Anxiety, nausea, dizziness, or a change in vision or other sensory disruption (smelling or hearing something strange).

These are signs that a person may be having a seizure:

- Unexplained episodes of staring or unresponsiveness
- Reports of tingling in parts of the body
- Stiffening or falling down
- Making an abnormal sound, screaming, or yelling
- Shaking violently all over, or in parts of the body
- Drooling or foaming at the mouth
- Loss of bladder control
- Loss of consciousness

Know what to do

What to do and not do when someone is having a seizure:

- **DO NOT** try to stop the seizure, put anything in the person's mouth, or provide food and drink until the seizure is completely over.
- **DO** protect the person from injury. Help him/her lie on his/her side. Loosen any clothing that is tight. Remove any furniture or moveable objects from his/her immediate area.
- During the seizure, pay close attention to and document which body part is involved first, second, third, etc.
- Pay attention to and document when the seizure starts and stops.
- Pay attention to and document what the person experiences after the seizure (such as bowel or bladder incontinence, sleep, etc.).
- Follow any special instructions from the doctor.
- Notify the nurse as soon as the person is safe.

IN AN EMERGENCY:

Call 9-1-1 immediately if the person:

- Is having a seizure for the first time
- Is having trouble breathing during or after a seizure
- Loses consciousness (becomes unresponsive)
- Has a seizure that results in serious injury
- Appears to aspirate during a seizure
- Has a seizure lasting more than five minutes or has several seizures in a row without recovering, unless there is a different instruction from the doctor.

