

Describing and Recording Seizures



Parents are often asked to describe what their child's seizures look like. What a seizure looks like is important for making a diagnosis and for guiding the treatment plan. Every child's seizures are different. Some children have more than one type of seizure.

Consider the following as you describe and record what happens when your child has a seizure. Let your child's Epilepsy Team know if there is a change in what your child's seizures look like.



Level of awareness (consciousness)

- aware (able to look at you or talk to you, knows who you are)
- not aware (doesn't respond to you)



Movement of limbs

- arms: right left both
- legs: right left both

Type of movement

- sudden loss of muscle tone (atonic)
- stiffening (tonic)
- jerking (clonic)
- jerk of single muscle or limb (myoclonic)
- posturing – uncontrolled, abnormal positioning of the body (e.g., flexing back)
- dystonia – involuntary muscle contractions that cause slow, repeated movements or abnormal postures
- other movements (e.g., bicycling, flailing, spasms, kicking)



Eye movements

- blinking fluttering rolling staring twitching
- deviation (eyes fixed to one direction):
 - right left up down
- pupils dilated (big) pupils constricted (small)



Facial movements

- twitching swallowing chewing spitting jerking
- lip smacking jaw clenching yawning drooling

Head movements

- right left up down no movement



Hand movements

- buttoning unbuttoning hand clenching clapping fumbling
- grabbing hand rubbing picking tapping twitching



Vocalizations

- cursing barking gagging gasping gibberish groaning
 grunting howling humming laughing moaning screaming
 singing snorting talking whistling

Skin changes

- flushed pale blue cold to touch



General behaviours

- agitation/distress emotional responses
 changes in breathing pattern (anger outbursts, appears frightened, crying, laughing)
 unconscious movements vomiting
 (running, twirling, wandering, turning over, undressing) loss of bladder and/or bowel control



Symptoms reported by the person who had the seizure

- unusual sensations
 sounds _____ tastes _____ smells _____ visions _____
 uncomfortable sensations (burning, numbness, pins and needles)
 “butterflies” in stomach upset stomach
 flushed feeling
 dizziness
 uncontrolled thoughts (anxiety, déjà vu, out of body experience, fear, forced thinking, loss of memory, sadness, sense of doom or dread)



Symptoms after the seizure

- fatigue/tired/sleepy difficulty talking
 headache (how long, where, how bad) _____ poor coordination
 loss of bladder and/or bowel control weakness, unable to move
 injury (where, type) _____ decreased gag reflex/poor swallowing
 behaviour changes changes in sleep pattern
 confusion



Other information about the seizure

- Time of the seizure
- How long the seizure lasted
- Activity before the seizure
- Symptoms felt by your child before the seizure started (aura)
- Changes in behaviour before the seizure (e.g., irritability, restlessness)
- Possible triggers (e.g., lack of sleep, fever, illness, dehydration, low blood sugar, hyperventilation, stress, change in medication, missed medication dose)
- Any special treatment needed (e.g., medication given)





Recording information about your child's seizures

Many keep a seizure diary or journal to record information about their child's seizures. You can use this booklet to help you describe your child's seizures and record the information that will be important to share with your child's health care team. There are also apps such as Seizure Tracker and My Seizure Diary to help you keep track of information about your child's seizures.



List the types of seizures your child has

What does it look like?

What does it look like?

What does it look like?



Developed by the SickKids Comprehensive Epilepsy Program