

THREE PRINCIPLES OF SEIZURE RESPONSE

Witnessing a seizure can be a frightening thing. Strangely, while lots of information is available about seizure disorders and what to do for someone having a seizure, there's little mention about the concerns of the person witnessing the seizure.

The first and most basic principle of seizure response is to remain calm. More easily said than done, the more you learn and understand about seizures, the less frightening they are to witness.

The second is to assure your own personal safety. Seldom mentioned, this principle of response applies to any medical situation and not only seizure response.

The third is to protect the person having the seizure. Yet, it can be difficult to remember what to do because a seizure is usually a completely unexpected occurrence.

This brochure will briefly cover all three principles, relative to the person witnessing a seizure.

ABOUT SERC

SERC is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. We provide advocacy services for people with seizures in several ways. We provide contact and referral to information and services. We focus on listening and sharing with those who experience the challenges that come from living with seizures.

Consistent with the educational and advocacy aspects of our mission, the focus of SERC events is on the often-neglected issues of the lived experience and social aspects of seizure disorders.

You can help make a difference in the community we share and in the lives of thousands of people whose lives are affected by seizure disorders by becoming a SERC volunteer.. Volunteers serve as Board members, do general office work or database entry, and help organize and participate in fundraising events and community support groups. Consider volunteering at the Seizure Education and Resource Center and becoming a part of our team.

SERC depends entirely on your support. Please feel free to contact us for more information, to volunteer, or to make a donation. Donations are gratefully accepted through our website (Pay Pal) at <http://www.sercsite.org> or by mail at SERC, 315 W. Mission Ave., Suite.19, Spokane, WA 99201.

YOU FIRST!

Safe Seizure Response



SERC

(Seizure Education & Resource Center)

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REMAIN CALM

Realizing that a person having a seizure is not conscious of his surroundings, despite the fact that he may be standing and staring, makes us uncomfortable. Being with a person who is experiencing inexplicable fear is even more disconcerting, perhaps because our comfort with others comes from a general knowledge of what behaviors and responses to expect from them. Automatic, repetitive behaviors – like chewing motions or picking at one's clothes – involuntary arm or leg movements, and uncontrolled laughing can also be symptoms of a seizure.

Whether the seizure is nothing more than a brief period of staring and unresponsiveness or a fall, followed by full body convulsions, it may look bizarre and be frightening, but looks are often misleading.

Fear of the unknown is best countered by information and education. Don't be afraid to ask questions, express your concerns and learn what a seizure is and, just as importantly, what it is not. It's best to do this before you witness a seizure but, after the experience, don't be afraid to talk about your own experience, ask questions and become better informed. Not only will that help *you* but it's likely to make others more comfortable about asking some of the same questions you have.

PERSONAL SAFETY

In some non-convulsive seizures, grabbing onto the person having the seizure or even laying your hand on her arm can trigger the "flight or fight" instinct. The person having the seizure may pull away or he may struggle, kick, or punch.

It's up to you to protect yourself by not pushing, pulling, grabbing or otherwise restraining someone having a seizure. Instead, place yourself between the person having the seizure and the area you do not wish her to approach. At the very worst, he may bump into you but even this is unlikely.

A biohazard is a biological substance that is potentially (but not necessarily) dangerous to human health because of infectious organisms that it may contain. Someone having a seizure may injure himself and bleed. He may salivate or lose control of his bladder. Blood, saliva and urine are all biohazards.

One way to avoid danger from biohazards is to wear gloves. Second best is to wash your hands well with soap and warm water. If you are responsible to clean up biohazards, be sure to wear gloves. And, there's no shame in contacting your personal physician if you are concerned about biohazards with which you may have come in contact.

PROTECT THE PERSON HAVING THE SEIZURE

Seizure recognition and first aid materials are available on our web site. Many of the things you should and should not do not only protect the person having the seizure but also protect you.

For instance, do not attempt to open the mouth, place anything into it, or position a person having convulsions on her back.

Contrary to the popular myth, you can't swallow your tongue, but placing someone on his back can cause the tongue to fall to the back of the throat and block the airway. Additionally, bleeding, regurgitation or secretions are more easily aspirated into the lungs from this position.

NEVER attempt to place something between the teeth of someone having a seizure. Not only is it entirely unnecessary, you could break teeth, cause a bleeding injury, or expose the person having the seizure to infection from any item you might use in such an attempt. You also create both the unnecessary risk of injuring yourself and having to deal with how you will feel about creating unnecessary injury to yourself or another, later.

In the days following the seizure, talk about your experience with others. It's the best way to relieve your own stress!