

# First Aid For Epilepsy

First aid for epilepsy is basically very simple. It keeps the person safe until the seizure stops naturally by itself. It is important to know how to respond to all seizures, including the most noticeable kind -- the generalized tonic clonic seizure, or convulsions.

When providing seizure first aid for generalized tonic clonic (grand mal) seizures, these are the **key things to remember**:

- It is suggested that the classroom be cleared while the student is having a seizure.
- Keep calm and reassure other people who may be nearby.
- Don't hold the person down or try to stop his movements.
- Time the seizure with your watch.
- Clear the area around the person of anything hard or sharp.
- Loosen ties or anything around the neck that may make breathing difficult.
- Put something flat and soft, like a folded jacket, under the head.
- Turn him or her gently onto one side. This will help keep the airway clear.
- Do not try to force the mouth open with any hard implement or with fingers. A person having a seizure CANNOT swallow his tongue. Efforts to hold the tongue down can injure teeth or jaw.
- Don't attempt artificial respiration except in the unlikely event that a person does not start breathing again after the seizure has stopped.
- Stay with the person until the seizure ends naturally.
- Be friendly and reassuring as consciousness returns.
- Offer to call a taxi, friend or relative to help the person get home if he seems confused or unable to get home by himself.

An un-complicated generalized tonic clonic (grand mal) seizure in someone who has epilepsy is not a medical emergency, even though it looks like one. It stops naturally after a few minutes without ill effects. The average person is able to continue about his business after a rest period, and may need only limited assistance, or no assistance at all, in getting home. In other circumstances, an ambulance should be called.

## When to Call for an Ambulance

For the following reasons:

- the seizure has happened in water.
- there's no medical I.D., and no way of knowing whether the seizure is caused by epilepsy.
- the person is pregnant, injured, or diabetic.
- the seizure continues for more than five minutes.
- a second seizure starts shortly after the first has ended.
- consciousness does not start to return after the shaking has stopped.

For more information see the following web site:

<http://www.epilepsyfoundation.org/about/firstaid/>