

Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog

Editor's Note: Content presented in the Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog is for awareness and informational purposes only, and it is not meant to be a diagnostic tool.

Besides the usual seizure first aid procedures of turning the person having the seizure on their side, removing glasses or other objects in the area, putting something soft under their head, and timing the seizure, what do you do and watch for when someone has a seizure? When someone has a seizure, they need your help to be kept safe. They also need a set of eyes to watch and take note of what happened.

The following list can help you learn what to watch for, should you observe a seizure. The details you note may be more helpful than you can imagine. It is important that you are as observant as possible.

Why Should You Write Down What You Saw?

When you write down what you see, those details could be very, very helpful to the person's doctor. A doctor typically does not see their patient seize and knowing exactly what another person saw is helpful for diagnosis. You are in a special and unique position to help another person, be it friend or stranger.

It is a good idea to write down as many details about what you saw as soon as possible. Let's look at some of the things you want to watch for during these phases of a seizure: before it begins, when it begins, during the event, and after it is over.

Before the Seizure Starts:

If you had a chance to observe the person prior to their seizure, consider these questions:

What was the person doing in the time leading up to the event?

Did you notice any change in their mood or behavior?

When did their mood or behavior start to change? Was it hours ago? Days?

What seemed different? Describe the changes you noticed.

When the Seizure Begins:

Note the date and time.

Start timing the event.

If the seizure lasts 5 minutes, call an ambulance.

What to Look for During the Seizure:

Is the person alert or confused?

Did the person have a change in awareness?

Does the person understand you when you speak to them?

Can the person speak?

Watch their movements. Are they twitching or having spasms?

Did you see where the symptoms started? Did they spread to other areas of the body?

Was it the right or left side of the body, or both?
Was there a loss of bladder or bowel control?
Be sure to jot down any other observations that you saw, but not mentioned here.

What Was it Like When the Seizure Ended?

What did the person remember after the event?
How aware are they after it happened?
Do they feel weakness or numbness, or a need to sleep?
Can they speak and communicate properly?
Do they have any change in their mood or how they are behaving?
Are they wandering?
Argumentative? Scared? Confused?

What Does the Patient Remember?

If you are the patient, writing down what happened from your perspective is very helpful. When you are able to process what happened, write down what happened and share it with your doctor.

Think back to before the seizure. Did you notice any type of aura or warning before the event? A metallic taste in the mouth? A funny feeling a sense that something was just not, right? Write it down.

It is important to think about any triggers or factors that may have led to or trigger the seizure. Although this is not a full list of seizure triggers, these are very common triggers:

- Changes in medications, missed medications
- Not getting enough sleep
- Not getting proper nourishment
- Drinking alcohol or taking other drugs or medications
- High levels of stress and tension
- Flashing lights, bright lights, or intense sunlight
- Other illnesses or infections
- Hormonal fluctuations/changes
- Time of day or month

Remember that your doctor benefits from a full picture of your seizure behavior when making a diagnosis, so don't be afraid to ask others what they saw.

Observing and noting what happens during a seizure is a way you can give help to a friend or stranger. The more information their doctor has, the better.

Editor's Note: The Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog will be distributed and posted weekly.
Always remember – **CARPE DIEM – SEIZE THE DAY!**

Steve.Hutton@epilepsy-ohio.org

