



AUSTRALIAN RESUSCITATION COUNCIL

GUIDELINE 9.2.4

FIRST AID MANAGEMENT OF A SEIZURE

INTRODUCTION

A seizure may occur:

- in a person with epilepsy
- in almost any condition affecting the brain, e.g. head injury, stroke, meningitis, brain tumour, hypoxia
- in association with some poisons and drugs
- during withdrawal from alcohol and other drugs of dependence
- in children under five years, in association with fever

RECOGNITION

A seizure may take many forms. In a major seizure:

- there is a sudden spasm of muscles producing rigidity and the victim will fall down (tonic phase)
- jerking movements of the head, arms and legs may occur (clonic phase)
- the victim becomes unconscious which may be associated with noisy breathing, salivation and urinary incontinence.

Seizures not resulting in loss of consciousness require little first aid other than reassurance and protection of the victim from injury.

Febrile convulsions are usually associated with a fever. Febrile convulsions occur in approximately 3% of all children at some stage between the age of six months and six years⁽¹⁾.

MANAGEMENT OF A SEIZURE

The victim should be managed as for any unconscious person. The rescuer should:

- remove the victim from danger or remove any dangerous objects which might cause injury to the victim.
- avoid restraining the victim during the seizure unless this is essential to avoid injury
- not force the victim's mouth open, nor attempt to insert any object into the mouth

- lay the victim down and turn the victim on the side as soon as possible to maintain and establish an airway
- check for breathing and, if resuscitation is needed, give care following the Basic Life Support Flow Chart Guideline 8
- reassure the victim who will be dazed, confused or drowsy
- seek medical advice as soon as possible, preferably calling an ambulance (Dial Triple Zero - 000).

If the seizure occurs in water, it is essential to protect the airway whilst moving the victim to a firm surface. The victim's head and shoulders must be supported to keep the face above the water.

REFERENCES

1. Gratten-Smith P. Textbook of Paediatric Emergency Medicine. Philadelphia: Churchill Livingstone Elsevier; c2006. Chapter 8.3, Seizures and non epileptic events; pp.229-33

LEVEL OF EVIDENCE

Expert Consensus Opinion

CLASS OF RECOMMENDATION

Class A - Recommended

FURTHER READING

ARC Guideline 2 Priorities in an Emergency
ARC Guideline 3 Unconsciousness
ARC Guideline 4 Airway
ARC Guideline 8 Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation