

Some people cannot remember what happened to them during a seizure and may not be aware that they have even had one. This can make it difficult for them to describe their seizures to their specialist. If you have witnessed a seizure, the questions below may help you to give them information to help their specialist come to a diagnosis.

How did the seizure start?

If known, when the seizure started, was the person awake  or asleep?

Was the person restless or did they cry out before the seizure started?

Was there any trigger for the seizure (such as feeling tired or stressed)?

What position were they in when the seizure happened or when they were found?

Standing  lying on front  lying on back  lying on side  sitting  other

Did they appear to have any warning beforehand? If so, what form did the warning take?

Did they have any unusual sensations, such as a taste or smell, a rising feeling in the stomach, numbness or pins and needles? When did they experience this?

Was there any change in muscle tone (did they become stiff or floppy)?

Did they fall down and, if so, forwards or backwards?

Did they lose awareness, appear dazed or confused or lose consciousness?

This factsheet lists what can be useful to know about someone's epilepsy, and what to look out for and note, before, during, and after a seizure. This may help a doctor to confirm a diagnosis or identify the type of seizures someone is having.

Epilepsy Society Helpline  
01494 601400  
Confidential, national call rate.  
Information and emotional support.

Was there any change in their breathing pattern? Did it become noisy or appear difficult or laboured?

Was there any change in their facial colour? Did they become pale, blue around the mouth, or flushed?

Were their eyes open or closed during the seizure? If open, were their eyes turned to one side (which side)?

Was there any movement, such as jerking or twitching? If so, was this rhythmical? Was it on both sides of the body or on one side only and, if so, which side? Was it symmetrical (exactly the same on both sides) or not symmetrical?

Were there any automatisms (automatic behaviours) such as wandering around, chewing or lip-smacking, making strange movements or postures with their limbs, picking up objects for no reason, or fiddling with clothing?

Did they make any noises, such as mumbling, speaking incoherently, or repeating words or phrases?

How long did the seizure last?

Were they incontinent (did they wet themselves)?

Did they bite the inside of their cheek or their tongue?

How were they afterwards? Were they confused or sleepy? If they slept afterwards, for how long?

How long did it take for them to fully recover and return to normal activities?

Every effort is made to ensure that all information is correct at the time of printing. Please note that information is intended for a UK audience. This information is not a substitute for advice from your own doctors. Epilepsy Society is not responsible for any actions taken as a result of using this information.

