

DID YOU KNOW?

More than 400,000 children in the United States under the age of 17 have epilepsy. The Epilepsy Foundation of Arizona, estimates 6,100 children in Arizona have epilepsy, and about 1,800 of those children have intractable seizures that require specialized care.

Children who have not responded to two or more medications should be referred to a Pediatric Epilepsy Center for evaluation. The Comprehensive Pediatric Epilepsy Program at Barrow Neurological Institute at Phoenix Children's Hospital brings the collaborative, enhanced care needed to provide the highest-level medical and surgical evaluation and treatment for patients with complex epilepsy.

The following is an informational guide on seizures and epilepsy. Read on for tips on what to do if your child has a seizure and important details to remember about the event.

SEIZURES

Normally, nerves in the brain communicate with one another by sending tiny electrical impulses. If these impulses get out of control and there is a sudden change in how the brain cells send signals to each other, a seizure can occur.

Seizures are also known as convulsions, fits or epilepsy. Most seizures last less than five minutes. During a seizure a child may pass out, fall, and the eyes stare, twitch, or roll up. The body becomes stiff and the arms and legs jerk or twitch. Or the child may just stare, look dazed, blink, or fall down. An infant may repeat some movements that just don't seem right. The child may wet his or her pants during the seizure. After the seizure, the child may be clumsy, weak or want to sleep.

Seizures happen for many reasons:

- born with a tendency to get seizures
- a blow or bump to the head strong enough to knock the child out
- an infection in the brain or spine
- a stroke caused by a blood clot or bleeding inside the brain
- a tumor or other growth that can press on the brain
- body chemistry out of balance, due to illness, poison or diet
- don't know the cause of about 50% to 75% of the time



Most seizures last less than seven minutes.

A child with epilepsy has many seizures, which are not caused by body chemistry being out of balance. A child who has one or two seizures may not have epilepsy, but a child with epilepsy has seizures.



As the child grows, the dose or type of medicine may change.

Anticonvulsants are medicines that control seizures. There are many kinds of these medicines. You must work closely with your doctor to control the child's seizures. As the child grows, the dose or type of medicine may change. Many children outgrow their seizures, and no longer have to take medicine. Others may have to take medicine the rest of their lives.

Some triggers may cause a person with epilepsy to have seizures, even if he or she takes medicine regularly. These triggers are:

- Certain situations, such as flashing lights or special sounds
- Fever
- Injuries
- Being very tired from hard work or play
- Not getting enough sleep
- A long time of not eating enough healthy food
- Stress or pressures in the family, at school or at work
- Each person responds to different triggers.

IF YOUR CHILD HAS A SEIZURE:

- Keep calm.
- Protect the child from getting hurt:
 - Move away furniture and things the child could get hurt on
 - Place the child on something soft, or the floor
- Do not hold the child to try to stop or lessen the seizure.
- If possible, turn the child on his or her side. This will keep the child from choking.
- Do not put anything in the child's mouth.
- Stay near the child until he or she is awake.
- Do not offer food or drink until the child is fully awake.

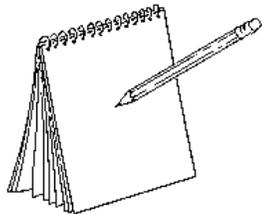


If the seizure lasts for more than five minutes, or the child has trouble breathing, call 911.

REMEMBER THE DETAILS.

If possible, write these things:

- Date of seizure
- When it began, how long it lasted
- Why you think it happened?
 - What was the trigger?
- Where did it start?
What parts of the body moved?
 - How did they move?
- Was the child awake during the seizure?
- Did the child sweat during or after the seizure?
- Did the child wet or soil his or her pants during or after the seizure?
- How long did it take for the child to wake up back to normal after the seizure?



Children and adults with epilepsy can live normal, happy lives.

If you have any questions or concerns, call:



- Your child's doctor
- The Pediatric Neurology Office at Phoenix Children's Hospital: 602-933-0970
- The Epilepsy Society of Arizona: 602-285-3581

CHOOSING A PEDIATRIC HEALTH CARE TEAM

Sometimes, a doctor's visit can seem overwhelming and confusing, especially when you've learned that your child requires a high level of specialty care. Choosing your pediatric epilepsy team is a really important decision, since they will be your partners in caring for and treating your child, and your family.

Before your appointment, you can look up the doctor's education and credentials at the Arizona Board of Medicine: <http://www.azmd.gov/GLSPages/DoctorSearch.aspx>

Many families have found it helpful to take friend or family member to the appointment to take notes. Bring a list of questions to ask, so you don't forget anything important.

Here are some questions you may want to ask the doctor:

- What kinds of tests does my child need?
Do these tests require any special preparation?
- How many children with my child's problem have you cared for?
- Does my child need treatment? If so, when?
- What are our treatment choices?
- What could happen if we decide not to treat?
- What is the best treatment?
- What are the possible problems or complications?
- How will we monitor for possible problems or complications?
- If I have more children, what are the odds of this condition occurring again?
- Can you give me any printed material on this that I can take home with me?
- Can you suggest some websites that have good information on this?
- What question do you think I should have asked?
- Can I teach back to you what I understood from this conversation, so you can correct any misunderstandings now?



Request an appointment today online or over the phone with the experts at the Pediatric Epilepsy Program at Barrow Neurological Institute at Phoenix Children's Hospital.

Barrow.PhoenixChildrens.org/Request-Appointment
(602) 933-1000 or toll free at (888) 908-5437

1919 E Thomas Road | Phoenix, AZ 85016

Disclaimer: The information provided is intended to be general information, and is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended to take the place of examination, treatment or consultation with a physician. Phoenix Children's Hospital urges you to contact your physician with any questions you may have about a medical condition.