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SEIZURE AND EPILEPSY, WHEN TO CALL 911

A convulsive 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 or her business after a rest period, and may need only limited assistance or no assistance at all, in getting home.

A non-convulsive seizure in someone who has epilepsy is also not a medical emergency.

No Need to Call an Ambulance

- if medical I.D. jewelry or card says "epilepsy," and
- if the seizure ends in under five minutes, and
- if consciousness returns without further incident, and
- if there are no signs of injury, physical distress, or pregnancy.

An Ambulance Should Be Called

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

If the ambulance arrives after consciousness has returned, the person should be asked whether the seizure was associated with epilepsy and whether emergency room care is wanted.

When these conditions exist, immediate medical attention is necessary:

- Diabetes
- Brain infections
- Heat exhaustion
- Pregnancy
- Poisoning
- Hypoglycemia
- High fever
- Head injury