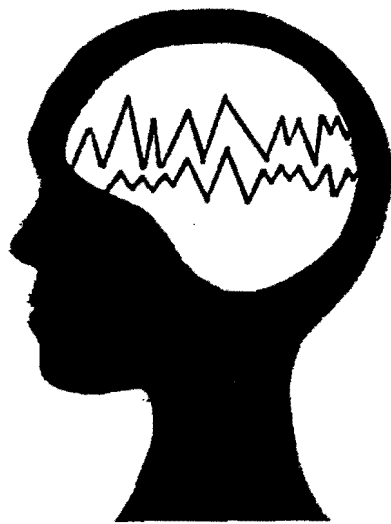


# HOW TO DESCRIBE A SEIZURE

THE EPILEPSY CENTER

UNC CHAPEL HILL



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**KEEPING YOU WELL AND WELL-INFORMED**

The doctor who treats your epilepsy may never see you having a seizure. Seizures are not predictable. They cannot be produced "at will". To provide the best treatment for your seizures, your doctor needs to know as much as possible about them. A full and accurate seizure description given by someone who has seen your seizures can be very helpful. You can also provide information about your "aura" (warning), how you feel after your seizure and describe what situations make you more likely to have seizures.

This outline has been written to help you and the person seeing your seizures know what information the doctor needs to have about your seizures. Some of the questions you can answer. Some can be answered by the person seeing the seizure. Read it over carefully. Then WRITE down the description on a separate sheet of paper. Don't just answer yes or no to the questions. Write the description as though you and the person seeing the seizure are telling a story. You can each write your own description. It is best to do this as soon as possible after you have recovered from your seizure.

Keep this information in a notebook and take it with you when you go to see your doctor.

**1. Do you have any warning before your seizure? (for example)**

- change in mood (agitated or suddenly quiet)
- restless
- unusual sensations: a "bad" taste in your mouth; smelling a "foul" odor; seeing spots or flashing lights or colors in front of your eyes; a strange rising feeling in your stomach, "butterflies" in your stomach; weakness, numbness, tingling (pins and needles) in hands, arms, feet, legs, or face
- make sounds: crying out, mumbling, speech that can't be understood or that doesn't make sense

**2. Does your seizure happen suddenly, without warning?**

**3. Do you fall? (for example)**

- frontwards or backwards
- do you go stiff and fall
- do you slump with a loss of body tone (like you have no bones)
- would you have fallen if you were not sitting or lying down

4. **Do you lose consciousness (blackout, fall out)? If yes, for how long?**
5. **Does your color change? (for example)**
  - suddenly pale
  - flushed (red)
  - cyanotic (turn blue)
6. **Do you move during your seizure? EXACTLY what parts of your body are involved? (for example)**
  - right, left or both sides of your body
  - face movements (chewing, lip smacking, face pulled to one side, shaking or tremor)
  - head or eyes turning— to what side
  - picking at or fumbling with clothes or other things around you
  - blank stare, eyelids flutter, blinking
  - stiffening of arms or legs
  - tremors
7. **Do you have trouble breathing? (for example)**
  - make grunting noises
  - stop breathing (for how long)
  - noisy, labored breathing
  - drooling
8. **How long does the seizure last?**
9. **Do you lose control of your urine (water) or bowels during a seizure?**
  - always
  - sometimes
  - never
  - urine (water)
  - feces (bowels)
  - both

10. **Can you talk during a seizure? If you can, do people understand you?**
11. **Can you hear what people are saying to you during a seizure? Do you understand what they are saying?**
12. **How do you feel after a seizure? (for example)**
  - recover immediately and go back to normal activities
  - awake, then sleepy (how long do you need to sleep)
  - agitated, restless, combative
  - confused (for how long)
13. **What things can you do after your seizure?**
14. **What things can't you do after your seizure?**
15. **Do you injure yourself during your seizures?**
16. **What things bring on a seizure?**

Please feel free to add any more information about your seizures that you think would be useful. Your doctor would rather have too much information than not enough.

If you need any help writing a seizure description, please feel free to call the Epilepsy Nurse Clinician at 919-966-0205. 843-1839

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