



Purpose of this teaching document:

The goal is to provide basic information in order to increase families' comfort and understanding of seizures. This document was developed for families on the Canuck Place program whose child may have a potential risk of seizures as a result of a brain injury or other causes like infection and neurology is not actively involved in care management.

What is a seizure?

A seizure is a brief, temporary disturbance of brain activity. Brain cells communicate with each other through tiny bursts of electrical impulses. When these electrical impulses in the brain misfire, a seizure may result.

What does a seizure look like?

Seizures in children can sometimes be difficult to distinguish. A child having a seizure may show one or more of the following: stare briefly, have a change in awareness (become confused, drowsy/unconscious), make unusual body movements, have repetitive movements, breathe heavily, have eyes that flutter or roll backward, straighten an arm/leg, cry out suddenly.

What should I do if I think my child is having a seizure?

Take a deep breath and try to remain calm.

You do not need to stop a seizure once it has started.

Your role is to stay with your child, keep your child safe and to be a comfort to your child.

Most seizures stop on their own.

See below for seizure first aid strategies to help support your child.

Seizure First Aid

Do not restrict movement: you and your child may be injured if you try to restrict movement. When the seizure is over, allow your child to rest. When he/she feels able, your child can go back to a comfortable level of activity.

Do not put anything in your child's mouth: it is physically impossible to swallow your tongue, but the child may choke if things are placed in his or her mouth.

Keep your child physically safe: remove any sharp or heavy objects that are nearby and make sure they are not around any dangers. Often he or she will be most comfortable and safest lying on his or her side, in the drainage position. This will help keep the airway clear by allowing any mucous/saliva drain out of the side of your child's mouth.

Talk to your child: your child may not be aware of what has happened and will need reassurance that he or she is safe. Stay with your child. Your



comforting voice will help create a feeling of safety. Talk in a slow, low voice to calm yourself and your child.

Make your child comfortable: when your child is physically safe, you can make your child comfortable. Wait until your child is relaxed and not having a convulsion, so that you do not get injured before attempting to loosen clothing, provide physical reassurance when appropriate (holding, etc.) or other forms of comfort your child responds well to.

Time the seizure: Knowing how long your child has been having a seizure is important for your healthcare team. Some parents have found it helpful to use their phone to video or use as a timer. Phones are often nearby and accessible. Others document on a piece of paper as a log.

Observe the seizure: note what your child looks like during the seizure, what preceded the seizure and how they were following the seizure.

When do I call 9-1-1:

- If you child is having problems breathing
- if the seizure lasts longer than 5 minutes
- if there is one seizure after another for longer than 15 minutes
- if your child remains unresponsive or does not regain consciousness soon as the seizure ends.
- If you are unsure whether you should call 9-1-1 or not, please call Canuck Place 604-742-3475

When do I call Canuck Place:

- If you are worried about your child or want support.
- If this is the first time your child might be having a seizure
- If your child has had seizures before and they are changing now in frequency, length or type.
- If you want to discuss with Canuck Place whether to call 9-1-1 for further support

If you have any questions, please call Canuck Place: 604-742-3475

If you have any feedback to help us improve this document, please email

APN@canuckplace.org

References

Sunny Hill Health Care Centre for Children. 2007. A Guide to Seizures for Families of Children with Increased Risk for Seizures.

<http://www.cw.bc.ca/library/pdf/pamphlets/SH15.pdf>

BC Children's Hospital. 2006. Seizure Safety and First Aid

<http://www.cw.bc.ca/library/pdf/pamphlets/BCCH1240SeizureSafetyAndFirstAid.pdf>



Canuck Place
CHILDREN'S HOSPICE

**Child Seizure Safety and
First Aid**

Child's Name:
Health Care #: