# First Aid for Epilepsy

What to do if you or someone you know has an epileptic seizure.

## What is epilepsy?

Epilepsy is a neurological disorder characterized by unpredictable seizures. Often called an “electrical storm” of the brain – epilepsy can lead to disruptive and devastating effects on daily life such as:

- Staring spells
- Repetitive movements like lip smacking
- Jerks and twitches
- Loss of bladder control

## What triggers seizures?

The cause is unknown in approximately 75% of epilepsy patients, but there are a few things that may trigger a seizure, including:

- Head trauma
- Infection
- Missed medication
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Lack of sleep
- Flashing or flickering lights

## Seizure do’s and dont’s

In these cases, a person loses consciousness, their muscles go rigid, and the whole body convulses:

**Do**
- Place the person onto one side
- Clear the area of hazardous objects
- Remove eyeglasses
- Time the seizure
- Call 911 if it lasts more than 5 minutes

**Don’t**
- Hold the person down or try to stop their movements
- Put anything in the person’s mouth
- Try to administer CPR

## Statistics

- **65 million** people worldwide suffer from epilepsy
- **1 in 26** Americans will develop epilepsy in their lifetime
- **87** new patients are diagnosed daily

## Sources

UT Southwestern, Citizens United for Research in Epilepsy (CURE), Center for Disease Control and Prevention, Epilepsy Foundation

O’Donnell Brain Institute