

# Seizures after Stroke: 7 Things You Should Know

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Experiencing seizures after stroke or watching someone experience a seizure can be a frightening experience.

The **post-stroke side effect** should be taken very seriously, and both stroke survivors and caregivers should be fully educated on how to handle a seizure if it happens. In this article, you will learn why seizures occur after stroke and what to do if they happen. It's important for everyone to be knowledgeable about seizure management – so educate everyone that you can!

## What Causes Seizures after Stroke?

Seizures happen when there is sudden disorganized electrical activity in the brain. There are over 40 types of seizures that range from slight tingling sensations to full bodily shaking and loss of consciousness.

Stroke survivors are more susceptible to seizures due to the brain damage from stroke. **Some sources** say that about 5% of stroke survivors will experience seizures after stroke. However,

members of our **stroke support group** (that you are more than welcome to join) agree that it seems to happen to more people than that. Therefore, being knowledgeable about seizure management is essential for all stroke survivors and caregivers.

## When Do Seizures Occur?

It is more common for seizures to occur within the first few weeks after stroke. However, everyone is different and every stroke is different, so this can vary greatly from person to person.

Some of the stroke survivors in our support group have experienced them for the first time *years* after stroke, which is yet another reason why seizure education is so important.

## What Should I Do When Someone Is Having a Seizure?

Knowing how to properly help someone who is having a seizure is critical for their health and safety. If you are a stroke survivor, be sure to share this information with your friends and family so that they know how to properly help you if you have a seizure.

**DO NOT hold the person down.** When someone is having a seizure, stopping their movement will not stop the seizure. The seizure is happening in their brain, not their body.

They don't know what's going on, and holding someone down when they are confused will only make them more confused, agitated, and possibly aggressive.

**DO NOT put anything in the person's mouth.** There is an unfortunately common misconception that someone can swallow their tongue while having a seizure, and that's simply not true.

DO NOT put an object or towel in someone's mouth who is having a seizure. It can potentially cause serious damage to their mouth since they cannot control their jaw.

**Roll them onto their side if they are on the floor.** This will help prevent possible choking.

**Stay with them until the seizure is over.** Stay calm and make sure they don't hurt themselves. Their safety is your top priority.

**Pay attention to how long the seizure lasts.** Most seizures last for a few minutes, but if a seizure lasts for longer than five minutes, call 911 immediately.

**Prevent injury by moving nearby objects away.** Since a person experiencing a seizure cannot control their bodily movement, it means that they cannot avoid sharp objects around them. Keep them safe by moving anything dangerous away.

**Make the person as comfortable as possible.** They're most likely frightened and confused, and any caring assistance you can give will help provide the security they need.

**Know when to call for help.** We will discuss these details next.

# Should I Call 9-1-1?

According to [epilepsy.com](http://epilepsy.com), you should call 911 for help if:

- Your seizure lasts for longer than 5 minutes
- You experience multiple seizures back-to-back
- The person appears to be choking or has trouble breathing
- The person is injured during the seizure
- The person asks for medical help
- This is the first seizure you've had

## Do Seizures Lead to Epilepsy?

Epilepsy is a neurological disorder where recurrent seizures occur that are unassociated with a specific cause. Having one seizure does not necessarily mean that you have epilepsy.

However, if you have chronic, recurring seizures, then you may be diagnosed with epilepsy. Since you should call 911 after chronic or repetitive seizures, your doctor will be able to give you more information on this.

## Can Seizures Be Treated?

Yes. Seizures can typically be controlled with anti-seizure medication. Sometimes medication is enough to fully control seizures.

When more effort is needed, there is also a device called a vagus nerve stimulator that acts as a 'pacemaker for the brain.' A surgeon can attach the battery-powered device to your vagus nerve in your neck to stimulate the nerve with electrical impulses. This helps prevent future seizures.