



Ohio Administrative Code 5123:2-17-02 requires all developmental disabilities employees to review Health and Welfare Alerts released by the department as part of annual training. All previous alerts are listed on the department's website.

## Seizure Management #53-7-18

Epilepsy is a disorder characterized by recurring seizures. A seizure is a brief, temporary change in the electrical activity of the brain, and is a symptom of epilepsy. Seizure types include partial or generalized seizures. Of nearly three million Americans with epilepsy, seizures affect one in three people with developmental disabilities.

### Recognizing Seizures

Understanding types of seizures may help people recognize seizures while giving care.

**Absence (*Petit Mal*)** -- Episodes of staring; inability to respond

**Atonic** -- Sudden loss of muscle tone, falls, drops things

**Tonic** -- Stiffening of body and upper arms

**Myoclonic** -- Jerking of neck, shoulders, body, and upper legs

**Tonic-Clonic (*Grand Mal or Convulsive*)**

Loss of consciousness; tonic phase includes stiffening, falls, crying out; clonic phase includes jerking

**Simple Partial** -- Sudden loss of muscle tone; movement and emotions affected

**Complex Partial** -- Impaired consciousness and recall

Watch to learn more about [seizure types](#).



Karen Brown, social worker with Epilepsy Alliance Ohio, discusses best practices for managing seizures and seizure types. [Watch here](#) or visit DODD's YouTube.

### Fast Facts

- 41** Ohioans with developmental disabilities died from seizures in 2017
- 284** people had unplanned hospitalizations due to seizures in 2017
- 52** significant injuries were reported as being caused by seizures in 2017

– DODD Incident Tracking System

## Seizure Triggers

**The number one reason for seizures is missed medication.**

Other triggers include high stress and anxiety, changes in a person's hormones, dehydration, interactions between medications, lack of sleep, and drug or alcohol use.



Karen Brown talks about [medication management](#) on DODD's YouTube.

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## Treatment Options

Treating seizures can include medication, surgery, lifestyle and diet modifications, or vagus nerve stimulation.



## Vagus Nerve Stimulators

A vagus nerve stimulator, or VNS, is a device implanted in a person's chest to control seizures by delivering electrical stimulation to the vagus nerve, which sends impulses to widespread areas of the brain. VNS is used to treat partial seizures when medication does not work.



Check out [the DODD training](#) for using VNS, or visit DODD MyLearning.

## What to Do

if a person is having a seizure

- Protect the person's head by removing glasses or tight neckwear
- Turn the person on their side
- Do not restrain the person but help them avoid hazards
- Do not put anything in the person's mouth
- Follow your first-aid training
- Call 911 if seizure lasts more than 5 minutes for those without a physician-ordered emergency treatment protocol
- Call 911 if it is unknown whether the person has had prior seizures
- *Status epilepticus* can be fatal and occurs if seizures happen one after another without recovery; seek immediate medical attention
- Stay until the person is fully aware and help to reorient them
- Track how long seizure lasts and what happens