

Employer toolkit

Supporting employees with epilepsy in the workplace

Focal seizure first aid – With references

On this page

[Watch a video of how to help](#)

[How to help](#)

[When to call an ambulance](#)

Focal seizures used to be called partial seizures. Some people with epilepsy still use this term.

Focal seizures can cause lots of different symptoms.

Someone having a focal seizure may not be aware of their surroundings or what they are doing. They may have unusual movements and behaviour such as plucking at their clothes, smacking their lips, swallowing repeatedly or wandering around. Some people have strange sensations, a feeling of déjà vu or can shout or swear.

Most focal seizures last between 1 and 2 minutes.

It's not always obvious that someone is having a focal seizure. Focal seizures can be mistaken for unusual behaviour or someone being drunk or on drugs.

Focal seizure

Watch this short video of a focal seizure and how to help.

[Watch the video](#)

How to help

Do:

- Guide them away from danger (such as roads or machinery)
- Stay with them until recovery is complete
- Be calmly reassuring
- Explain anything that they may have missed

Don't:

- Don't restrain them
- Don't act in a way that could frighten them, such as making abrupt movements or shouting at them
- Don't assume they are aware of what is happening, or what has happened
- Don't give them anything to eat or drink until they are fully recovered
- Don't attempt to bring them round



Focal seizures do not normally need medical attention. You should call an ambulance if any of these things apply:

- You know it's the person's first seizure
- The seizure lasts for more than 5 minutes
- They have one seizure after another without regaining consciousness between seizures
- They are injured during the seizure

[More info about focal seizures](#)

References

There are no references for this information.

[**employers.epilepsy.org.uk**](https://employers.epilepsy.org.uk)

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