

# Employer toolkit

Supporting employees with epilepsy in the workplace

## Tonic seizures – With references

### Signs and symptoms

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Tonic seizures make the muscles tighten and the body go stiff. This can happen on one side or both sides of the body. The seizures are usually short, lasting for less than 60 seconds. They often happen while people are asleep.

### What happens

- During a tonic seizure the person's muscles tighten, and their body will stiffen. If they are standing, they might fall to the ground
- The person's neck will extend, the eyes open wide and roll upwards. Their arms may raise upwards and the legs might stretch or contract. Tonic seizures can affect the whole body or just one area of the body, depending on which part of the brain the epileptic activity is happening in
- Sometimes the tightening muscles push air out of lungs which can cause the person to cry out. This is the sound of air being squeezed out of the lungs, not because they are in pain
- Some people stop breathing during a tonic seizure, which can cause a blue tinge

### What happens afterwards

Recovery from a tonic seizure tends to be immediate. The person might feel sleepy or confused afterwards.

Because they often happen when people are sleeping, they can disturb a person's sleep, and make them feel tired during the day.

## How to help

For how to help someone who is having a tonic seizure, go to the first aid for seizures information.

[Tonic seizure first aid](#)

## References

There are no references for this information.

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

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