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## **Seize the moment with seizures**

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This is the season to spend quality time with family and friends. Imagine you've invited your best friend over for dinner with your relatives. He arrives early to sample your latest video game offerings. You pop one into the console - one with a cacophony of sounds accompanied by equally wild, rapidly altering lights.

One minute, your friend is mesmerised by the game. The next, you see him on the ground. His body is moving in short, sudden, uncontrollable bursts.

His arms and legs are shaking, like in a trance where he's lost awareness. Yes, you've guessed it - your friend is having a seizure.

What to do

Seizures occur when the brain fires off non-stop electrical currents. These surges are capable of causing convulsions owing to muscle contractions, and the person may even lose consciousness.

Habitual seizures are usually associated with people who suffer from epilepsy. But it does not automatically mean that if you have a seizure you have epilepsy.

Seizures occur owing to a variety of reasons: a blow to the head, reactions to drugs or medication, heart attacks, a brain tumour or diabetes, among other things.

You can even suffer seizures from visual stimuli, such as flashing lights - the most likely reason your friend is having a seizure now.

Remain calm. Seizures look a lot more frightening than the medical risks they pose.

If your friend is an epileptic, he will have experienced seizures before. Ensure he is in a safe area with open space.

Violent or sudden movements may occur. Remove any sharp or heavy objects that are near him, or those that he is wearing, such as glasses or a watch.

Remove tight clothing that may restrict his movement or breathing. But don't restrain his movements.

Keep track of the time that passes, from the beginning of the seizure to the end. A typical seizure will last anywhere from 30 seconds to two minutes. If an attack lasts longer than five minutes, it's considered a health risk. Call 999 or contact medical

personnel immediately.

Pad your friend's head with a soft object to stop it from hitting the ground. A pillow, rolled-up jacket or blanket will work. Position him on his side so any vomit will be excreted out of his mouth.

Never place anything inside his mouth. One misconception is that victims will swallow their own tongues; this won't happen. They may bite it, but can't swallow it.

After the seizure, allow your friend to recover slowly. Encourage him to breathe and assure him that everything is all right. If they suffered any injuries, are pregnant or diabetic, or if a second seizure occurs, call 999.

Steps to help a seizure victim

- 1 Keep hazardous objects away from victim
- 2 Start timing the seizure. If it lasts longer than five minutes, call 999
- 3 Position the victim on their side (in the recovery position)
- 4 Loosen tight clothing to ensure freedom of movement
- 5 Do not restrict their convulsions
- 6 Don't stick anything in their mouth; they won't swallow their own tongue
- 7 Reassure them that everything will be okay
- 8 If there's a second seizure, call 999
- 9 If the person is pregnant, a diabetic or if they have suffered an injury, call 999