



# epilepsy classroom™

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FOR PARENTS AND TEACHERS



## An Introduction to Epilepsy

# Understanding Epilepsy

- **Epilepsy is one of the most common disorders of the nervous system, affecting more than 3 million Americans**
  - While epilepsy can develop at any time of life, the occurrence of new cases is more common in *children* and in people older than 60 years of age
- **In most cases, the cause of epilepsy is unknown**
- **The word “epilepsy” is derived from a Greek word meaning “to seize”**
- **Many notable people in history have been diagnosed with or are believed to have had some form of epilepsy, including:**
  - Julius Caesar
  - Albert Einstein
  - Agatha Christie

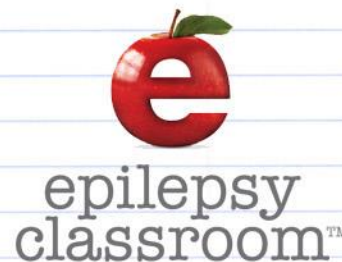
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# What Is Epilepsy?

- **Epilepsy is a group of related disorders, not a single disease**
- **A person who has had more than one seizure that has occurred spontaneously (not the result of a temporary, treatable condition) is said to have epilepsy**
  - A seizure is the physical manifestation of a sudden disruption of orderly communication between neurons in the brain
  - A seizure can take a variety of forms, depending on where the disruption occurs and how far the resulting abnormal electrical activity spreads
- **The type of epilepsy a person has is determined by their predominant seizure type and other related signs and symptoms**

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# Defining Different Seizure Types

## Partial seizures

Seizures that initially affect one specific area in one hemisphere of the brain

- May or may not cause an alteration of consciousness
- Symptoms can include muscle twitching, repetitive motions, and the appearance of “daydreaming”
- Partial seizures can become generalized seizures

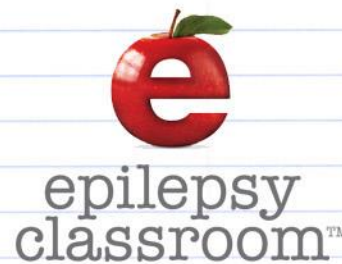
## Generalized seizures

Seizures that affect both hemispheres of the brain

- Result in a loss of consciousness
- Symptoms can include blank stares, falling to the floor, sudden muscle jerks, and repetitive stiffening and relaxing of muscles

Learn more about the different types of seizures at [www.EpilepsyClassroom.com](http://www.EpilepsyClassroom.com)

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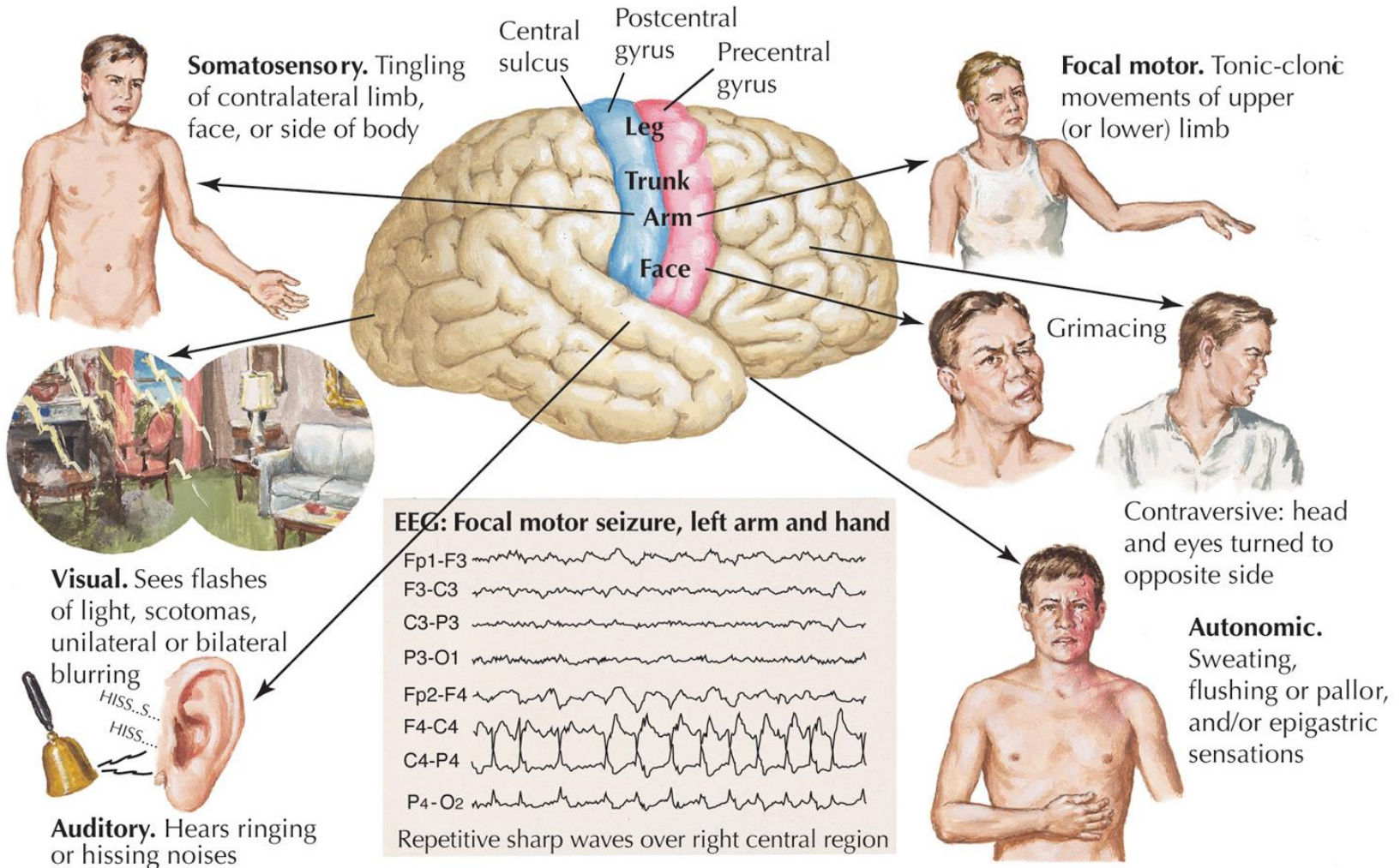
# Partial Seizures

- **Simple partial seizures**
  - Affect one specific part of the brain only, and do not cause a change in consciousness
- **Complex partial seizures**
  - Affect a larger area of the brain and result in alteration or loss of consciousness
- **Secondarily generalized seizures**
  - Begin as a partial seizure in one area of the brain and spread to affect the whole brain





# Simple Partial Seizures



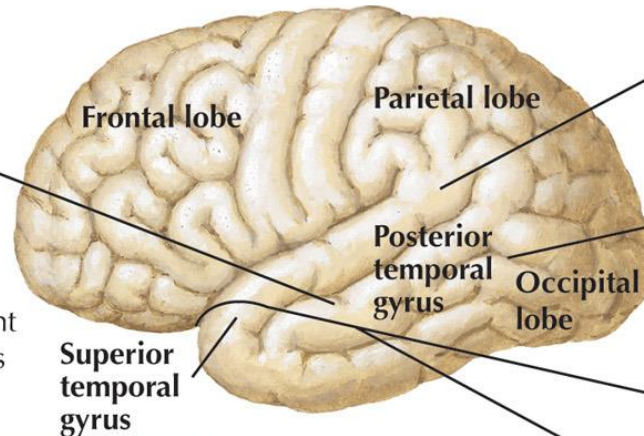


# Complex Partial Seizures

Impairment of consciousness:  
cognitive, affective symptoms



Dreamy state; blank, vacant expression; déjà vu; jamais vu; or fear



**Formed auditory hallucinations.** Hears music, etc



**Formed visual hallucinations.** Sees house, trees that are not there

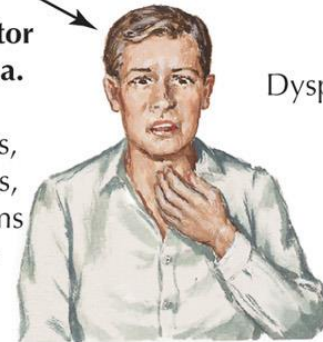


Bad or unusual smell

**Olfactory hallucinations**

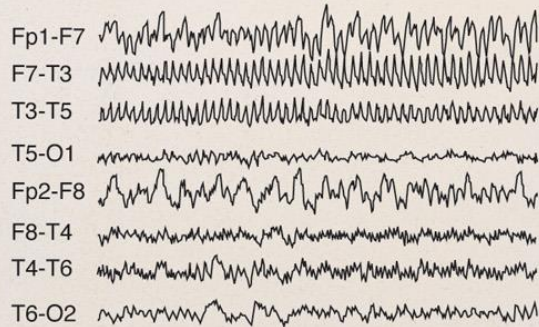


**Psychomotor phenomena.** Chewing movements, wetting lips, automatisms (picking at clothing)



Dysphasia

## EEG: left temporal lobe seizure

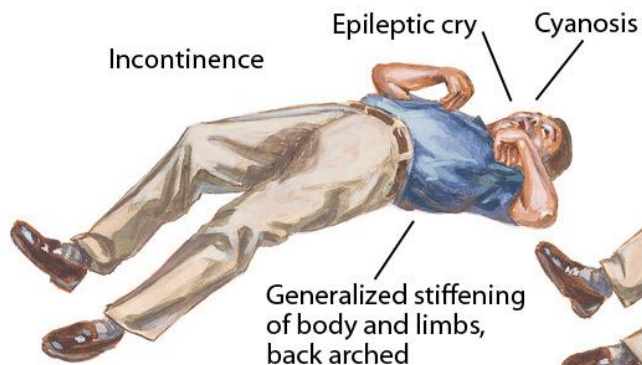


Repetitive sharp waves over left temporal region

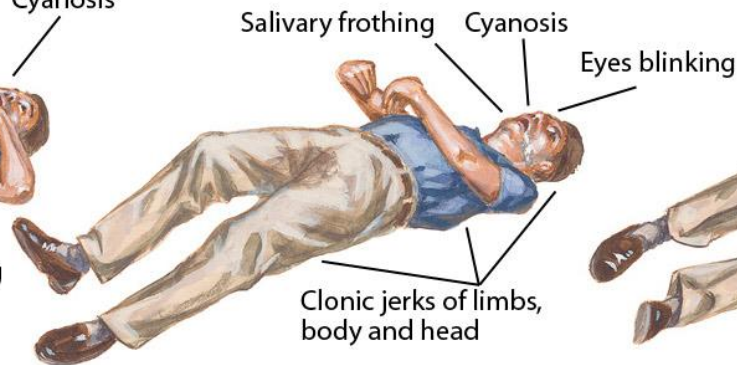
# Generalized Tonic-Clonic Seizure

- Occurs in all age groups
- Involves complete loss of consciousness
- Previously referred to as a “grand mal” seizure

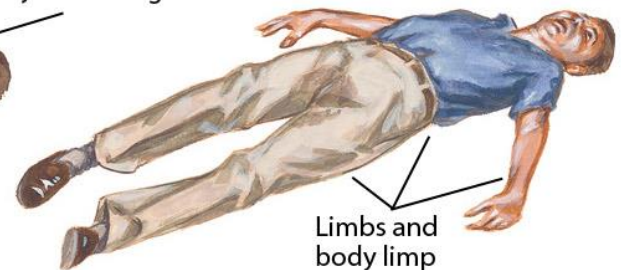
A. Tonic phase



B. Clonic phase



C. Post-ictal  
confusional fatigue



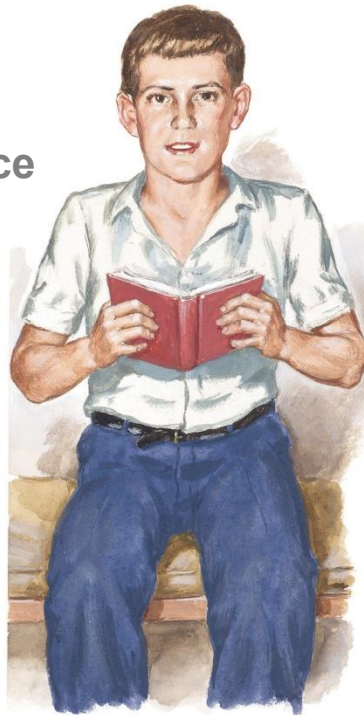


# Absence Seizure

- Most common in children
- Involves a brief disruption of consciousness
- Previously referred to as a “petit mal” seizure

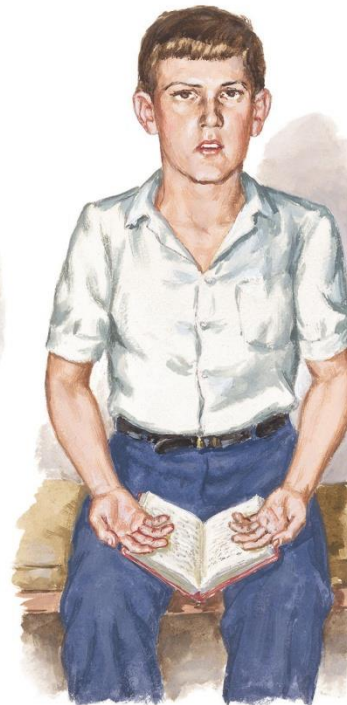
## Between Seizures:

- Normal appearance



## During Seizure:

- Vacant stare
- Eyes roll upward
- Lack of response



# How to Respond to a Tonic-Clonic Seizure

- **Your primary responsibility during a seizure is to make sure the seizing student is as safe as possible. Here are some steps you can take:**
  - Remain calm and let the seizure happen. You will not be able to stop a seizure. Most last from 30 seconds to 2 minutes
  - Help the student to the floor and place something soft under his or her head. Do not hold the student down
  - Move aside any objects that may cause injury
  - Do not put anything in the student's mouth. Contrary to popular belief, a person who's seizing cannot swallow his tongue
  - Help maintain the student's dignity by moving onlookers away
  - Once the jerking movements have stopped, lay the student on his or her side. This will help prevent choking should the student vomit
  - While regaining consciousness, the student will likely be confused and disoriented. Reassure the student that he or she is safe
  - Stay with the student and do not let him or her eat or drink until fully alert

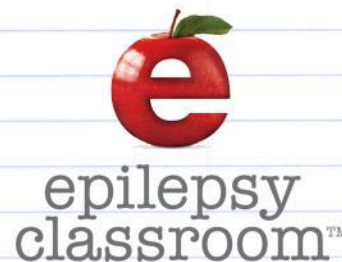




# When to Call 911

- Be sure to follow your school's protocol, and/or the student's parents' or doctor's instructions
- The National Epilepsy Foundation recommends that you seek emergency medical care immediately if:
  - A seizure lasts more than 5 minutes
  - You see that the student is having more than one seizure without regaining consciousness

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# Talking to Your Class

- **If a seizure occurs, it can be beneficial to have a discussion with your class about what they have witnessed:**
  - Have a discussion as soon as possible
  - Have a school nurse attend, if he or she is available
  - Provide factual information suitable to your classroom's age level and level of comprehension
  - Explain to the class what has happened, answer their questions, and give them a chance to say how they feel
  - Contact the parents of the student who has seized, according to the instructions they have provided
  - Consider telling the parents of other students in the class what has happened so they can discuss it further with their children
  - After a few days, revisit your discussion so that you can address any questions or issues. You may want to ask the parents of the student with epilepsy if they want to take part

Additional resources on how to address your class after a student has a seizure are available at [www.EpilepsyAdvocate.com](http://www.EpilepsyAdvocate.com).





# Help Promote Epilepsy Awareness

- **Bringing epilepsy awareness to the classroom can provide many valuable lessons:**
  - Acceptance of others
  - De-stigmatizing epilepsy and other health conditions
  - Furthering students' understanding of basic and advanced functions of the brain
  - Enrich health, science, and social studies lessons

Find additional tools on teaching epilepsy awareness at  
[www.EpilepsyClassroom.com](http://www.EpilepsyClassroom.com).

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