

## Seizures

### What are seizures?

Seizures are more commonly called 'fits'. They happen when usual electrical activity in your pet's brain causes them to lose control of their muscles. A fit, which can look like a twitch or uncontrollable shaking, can last for a few seconds or for several minutes.

If your pet is about to have a fit, you might notice them behaving oddly. Some animals may look dazed or stare off into the distance before a seizure. They can seem confused or nervous. If your pet has regular fits you might learn to notice these signs so you can tell when a fit is coming.

Although seizures aren't immediately life-threatening, your pet may lose control of their body, which can be frightening.



### Here are some things that usually happen if your pet has a fit:

- fierce trembling or jerking, paddling with their legs
- glazed eyes
- they may salivate a lot

- their jaw could be clamped shut
- they might wee or poo during the fit
- they might stop reacting to your voice or touch, unaware of their surroundings.

### **What to do if your pet has a seizure**

It can be very distressing to watch your pet have a seizure. Follow our steps below to keep your pet safe until it finishes:

#### **Do:**

- Stay calm – we understand it’s a frightening situation, but it’s important to try your best to remain composed.
- If your pet is on a sofa or bed, carefully move them down onto the floor so they don’t fall.
- Clear some space around them so they can’t hurt themselves.
- Dim the lights and make the room as quiet as possible.
- Start a timer so you know how long the seizure lasts and, if possible, video your pet – this will provide valuable clues for your vet.
- Keep the room as cool as possible – seizures often cause a rise in body temperature.
- Don’t transport your pet until the seizure has stopped (unless your vet advises otherwise).
- Call your vet if the seizure lasts for more than two minutes, or if it isn’t the first one your pet has had in the past 24 hours. Otherwise, call them once your pet has started to come round.

#### **Don’t:**

- Don’t restrain them – you might end up hurting them or yourself.
- Don’t try to bring them round from their seizure by shouting, shaking or hitting them – this will probably make their seizure worse.
- Don’t get anywhere near their mouth – you are likely to get bitten.
- Don’t wrap them up – they might overheat.



### **What causes seizures in dogs**

There are many different things that can cause seizures in dogs including:

**(i) Idiopathic epilepsy** -idiopathic epilepsy is the most common cause of seizures in dogs between six months and six years old. It's known to be genetic (passed from parent to puppies) in several breeds of dogs. The cause is unknown. The diagnosis is exclusion of all other causes.

**(ii) Toxins**- toxins such as caffeine, chocolate, rat poison and slug bait can all cause seizures.

**(iii) Head trauma** -severe head injuries can cause seizures.

**(iv) Heatstroke**- seizures are common in severe cases of heatstroke.

**(v) Hypoglycaemia** (low blood sugar)-if blood sugar drops very low, it can cause seizures. This is very rare in fit healthy dogs and mostly affects diabetic dogs, dogs with pancreatic tumours (insulinoma) and young puppies that have gone without food for a long time.

**(vi) Liver disease**- one of the functions of the liver is to remove toxins from the blood. If it isn't functioning properly, these toxins can build up and cause seizures. This is most common in older dogs with severe liver disease and very young puppies born with a condition called a 'portosystemic shunt'.

**(vii) Infections**- bacterial and viral infections can cause seizures if they affect the brain. Lungworm is a common parasite of dogs in the UK which can cause seizures if it enters the brain.

**(viii) Brain tumours or inflammatory brain conditions** - brain tumours or inflammatory conditions (e.g. meningioencephalitis) are rare but can cause seizures in dogs. If your dog is under six years old, a brain tumour is very unlikely to be the cause of their seizures.

**(ix) Hypocalcaemia** (low calcium) - if blood calcium levels drop too low it can cause seizures. This is most common in female dogs after whelping (giving birth) or while they are lactating.

### **When to contact us**

**If your dog is having a seizure right now, follow our first aid advice written above.**

**Call us once they have started to come round, or if the seizure lasts for longer than two minutes. Do not transport your dog during a seizure unless we have instructed you to.**

**To book in for your dog in for a health check or testing, please call us on 01423 228080 or visit [www.clarohillvets.co.uk](http://www.clarohillvets.co.uk).**