

Epilepsy and Seizure Control

Watching your dog experience a seizure can be a scary thing, and for good reason: seizures are usually very intense, and if your dog has one, you will probably see him or her convulse and thrash, cry and yelp, drool, and urinate and defecate excessively. So what exactly are seizures, and why do they affect some of our canine friends?

Seizures result from abnormal brain activity, the cause of which is not always understood. Not only are they distressing to witness, they also vary greatly in severity. While some seizures are considered mild, often a seizure is a medical emergency requiring immediate veterinary attention.

Seizures should not be ignored. Although some seizures are [ideopathic](#), meaning there is no identifiable underlying cause, often can signal a variety of underlying conditions in your pet. Culprits include epilepsy, brain tumors, trauma, certain toxins, and metabolic issues such as low blood sugar, low calcium levels, high blood pressure, or liver disease. If your pet has a seizure, it is extremely important to work with your veterinarian to determine the cause

Diagnosis

If your pet experiences a seizure, a diagnostic evaluation might include the following:

- Complete blood count and/or blood chemistry profile
- Urinalysis
- Liver function tests
- Blood pressure tests
- Evaluation of cerebrospinal fluid
- Imaging studies such as CT or MRI scan
- In some cases, consultation with a specialist

Epilepsy in dogs

Epilepsy is a syndrome of recurrent, unprovoked seizures without a known cause. You have probably heard of epilepsy before, as it is known to affect many humans [revise]. Epilepsy can also affect your pets. In fact, epilepsy is a common reason for seizures in young-to-middle-aged dogs, though it rarely affects cats. It is likely that genetics play a role: several dog breeds are at risk of developing epilepsy, including *breed*, *breed*, and *breed*.

Treatment of Epilepsy

Epilepsy cannot be cured but it can usually be controlled with anticonvulsant drugs. Dogs diagnosed with the condition will undergo treatment for life, and sometimes more than one drug is needed in some patients for adequate seizure control. And while many dogs are well controlled, some are not despite multiple medications.

In addition, adequate seizure control does not necessarily guarantee that a dog will be entirely seizure free. The degree of seizure control may need to be balanced against potential side effects of medications. Frequent consultation with your veterinarian is very important for optimal management of your pet's epilepsy and to monitor for side effects of the medications. Medication dosages should not be changed without talking to your veterinarian first.

Phenobarbital, usually given as a pill, is commonly used as a traditional anticonvulsant medication in dogs and cats with epilepsy. While it is generally a well-tolerated drug, as with any drug some patients experience side effects. In order to make sure an adequate dose of phenobarbital is being given, and to monitor for side effects, it is important that blood levels of phenobarbital as well as complete blood counts and blood chemistry profiles be monitored periodically while your pet is on the medication. Liver function tests can be needed if liver toxicity is suspected. Your veterinarian will advise what monitoring needs to be done and how often.

Management

There are many ways you can help manage your pet's epilepsy:

- Maintain a seizure log that lists date, time, length and severity of seizures and share this with your veterinarian
- Do not change or discontinue medications without consulting your veterinarian
- Have blood work and other lab work done when recommended by your veterinarian
- Consult your veterinarian about potentially dangerous seizure situations
- Put a medical alert tag on your pet's collar so

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that if they become lost whoever finds them will be aware of their seizure disorder and need for medication.

Several treatments are available for pets with epilepsy. By working closely with your veterinarian, you can maximize the chances of controlling the disorder and giving your pet a long, happy, and comfortable life.

If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian – they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.