

## What is a seizure?

A seizure is when an involuntary behavior occurs that is not consciously controlled (also known as a convulsion). Seizures tend to be followed by a post-ictal phase (phase following the seizure) where the animal appears disoriented and even blind. This phase can last several minutes to hours. There are several different classes of seizures, that include:

- Grand Mal (generalized seizure): This is the most common seizure seen in animals, where stiffness occurs as well as loss of consciousness and possibly urination and/or defecation. This type of seizure can also have cycles of stiffness and contractions.
- Partial Seizures: These are generated from a specific area in the brain and therefore tend to only affect a specific body area, but have been known to generalize through the whole body.
- Psychomotor Seizures: These seizures are known to be behavior related which would include howling, snapping, and circling, etc.

## What causes a seizure?

There are many different reasons why seizures can occur. We can group them into two areas:

### Intracranial (within the brain)

- Primary epilepsy (unknown cause within the brain)
- Congenital problems (problems with the brain present at birth)
- Infections and inflammation of the brain (encephalitis, meningitis, etc.)
- Head trauma
- Cancer

### Extracranial (outside of the brain)

- Exposure to toxins (antifreeze, pesticides), or ingestion of human medications
- Metabolic problems (low blood sugar or low blood calcium)
- Certain types of liver disease

## Diagnosing Seizures

Typically with a comprehensive physical exam and thorough history from the pet's owner along with lab work can help determine the possible cause of the seizure. In some cases special radiology tests, such as CT or MRI scans, are required to obtain a specific diagnosis.

## Treatment

Treatment of seizures is determined by the cause. Epilepsy, the most common type of seizure, is treated with life-long anti-seizure medication to help reduce the severity and occurrence of seizures. These medications must be given exactly as directed and monitored as recommended by your veterinarian.

## When to call the veterinarian

- If you are unable to give medications as directed
- If a seizure lasts longer than 5 minutes
- If you have any questions or concerns about your pet's health

