

## What to do when my dog is having a seizure

Watching your pet have a seizure is a terrifying thing to witness. One minute your dog seems perfectly normal, then next he's on his side, eyes glazed, muscles twitching frenetically. He may even lose control of his bladder or bowels. A result of abnormal electrical activity in the brain, this episode may last only seconds, but when it happens, time seems to move in slow motion.

Did you know that an animal is allowed to have one seizure every 30 days without concern from the medical field, HOWEVER two or more within a 30 day period you need to see your veterinarian and discussion for medication needs to started along with tests. With each seizure, more nerve cells within the brain will begin to fire randomly. Per Dr. Podell, "The brain's threshold for seizure may lower on a constant basis." In other words, each seizure makes it more likely that another one will occur. This in turn can make the seizures progressively more difficult to manage."

## What to do if my dog is having a seizure

1. **DO NOT PICK UP AND HOLD YOUR DOG.** Leave them alone
2. keep calm your dog needs you
2. ensure that the surroundings are safe.
  - if he is on a couch or bed (off the floor) stand in front of the dog to ensure he does not fall off
  - if his head is hitting the floor lay your hand between the head and the floor for cushion
  - ensure nothing is restraining the dog such as a collar or leash
3. look at the clock and track what time the seizure starts and ends

**ALERT:** when no one is home to supervise your dog it is important that he be crated for safety reasons. A plastic crate is preferred as his limbs cannot get stuck between the wire and break his bones if he seizes while crate. It is better to be crated than fall off the couch or bed during a seizure.

## What to do once the seizure is over

### **\*DOCUMENT EVERYTHING:**

1. what day and time the seizure happened
2. how long did the seizure last. if you remembered to look at the clock (unfortunately we are so horrified by what is happening we do not look at the clock but this part is critical because what may only be 30 seconds to us feels like minutes)
3. what did the body do during the seizure (legs tightened, facial twitches, loss of bladder, foam at the mouth, etc) Be as detailed as possible.
4. what side effects did the seizure leave once over (could not walk, went blind for 15 mins, acted normal as if nothing happened, drank a bowl of water, etc) Be as detailed as possible.
5. what activities did the dog experience within the 24 hours leading up to the seizure
6. call your vet and report the seizure so they too have documentation

## **What to expect when my dog has had two or more seizures in a 30 day period**

1. schedule a visit with the vet, sooner than later
2. basic bloodwork will be required prior to starting any medication. At this point medication needs to be started (Phenobarbital is the most common drug in these cases)
3. once your dog is placed on seizure medication he will remain on the medication for the rest of his life.

-at some point you will find that phenobarbital is not enough and this is when potassium bromide will be added

-sad note: unfortunately, it will be seizures that will ultimately take your pet's life. The meds will no longer work and you will not be able to control the seizures.

## **Testing**

Because there are so many potential underlying causes of seizures, the workup must be step-wise and thorough, a comprehensive attempt to parse the possible culprits: disorders originating within the brain (tumors; viral, bacterial or parasitic infections; strokes; head trauma) from those originating outside the brain. For instance, nutritional deficiencies as well as toxins like lead, insecticides, moldy foods and some human supplements can provoke brain changes that lead to seizures. Additionally, metabolic abnormalities such as liver or kidney disease can cause seizures, and some anesthetic agents and medications may also trigger them in sensitive animals.

## **Bostons and seizures**

Unfortunately, seizures are very common in the bred. A majority fall under the category of idiopathic (cause unknown) epilepsy. If the dog is less than one year of age, he is more likely to have a congenital abnormality, and if he's older than five, specific disorders of the brain are more common. For bostons the most common is brain tumor.