**Epilepsy**

**Summary**

**Myoclonic** means ‘muscle jerk’. Muscle jerks are not always due to epilepsy (for example, some people have them as they fall asleep). Myoclonic seizures are brief but can happen in clusters (many happening close together in time) and often happen shortly after waking.

In myoclonic seizures the person is conscious, but they are classified as generalised seizures. This is because the person is likely to have other seizures (such as tonic clonic seizures) as well as myoclonic seizures.

**Symptoms**

**Tonic clonic seizures (previously called grand mal)**

These are the seizures most people think of as epilepsy.

At the start of the seizure:

* the person becomes unconscious
* their body goes stiff and if they are standing up they usually fall backwards
* they may cry out
* they may bite their tongue or cheek.

During the seizure:

* they jerk and shake (convulse) as their muscles relax and tighten rhythmically
* their breathing might be affected and become difficult or sound noisy
* their skin may change colour and become very pale or bluish
* they may wet themselves.

After the seizure (once the jerking stops):

* their breathing and colour return to normal
* they may feel tired, confused, have a headache or want to sleep.

**Strategies**

1. Stay calm.
2. **Help** the person lie down, and place something soft under the head and neck.
3. Keep the person (especially the head) away from sharp or hard objects such as the corner of a table.
4. Time **how** long the **seizure** lasts, especially the stiffening and jerking movements.
5. If seizure lasts for more than 5 minutes call an ambulance.

<https://www.epilepsysociety.org.uk/myoclonic-seizures#.XQto1YhKiUk>

<https://www.youngepilepsy.org.uk/guide-for-schools/>