

Epilepsy and Your Dog

Know the signs of a canine epileptic seizure.

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Epilepsy, a common neurological problem, is a term used when the cause of the seizures cannot be determined. After exhaustive diagnostic testing, if no diagnosis is made, the pet is determined to have "epilepsy." Seizures occur when neurons in the brain fire rapidly and in an uncoordinated fashion. Seizures can be caused by many things (poisons, infections, inflammation, trauma, tumors, parasites and so on), by definition, there is no identifiable cause for the seizures when the term epilepsy is used.

Most dogs will have full-blown, grand mal seizures. Just as in people, the dog collapses to the ground, shakes and twitches its body, and may lose bowel or bladder control. Although it's usually not life-threatening, watching a seizing pet is quite disconcerting to most owners.

What to do if your dog experiences a seizure:

Because pet owners are often frightened when a pet experiences an epileptic seizure, it's important to know how you can help your pet if it seizes. Several things can help reduce the severity of your pet's seizure:

- * If you notice your pet seizing, dimming or turning off the lights can reduce visual stimulation to the brain. This often shortens the duration of the seizure.
- * Administering a flower essence called Bach's Rescue Remedy to the pet during the seizure (by gently placing a few drops on the gums) may also help.
- * Softly talking to the pet, while gently petting or stroking its neck and shoulder areas, can calm it as it recovers from the seizure.
- * Finally, applying an ice pack over the middle of the pet's back can reduce seizures by stimulating the acupuncture points in this area.

Above all, do not attempt to restrain your dog or put anything into its mouth (it is unlikely the dog will "swallow its tongue.")

Want to read more about natural and holistic healthcare? Check out the Natural Health Solutions column by Shawn Messonnier, DVM, in every issue of Dog World magazine.