

Dog With Seizures Needs Medication

Start with a thorough veterinary exam for seizing dog.

By Jon Geller, DVM

Q. My newly purchased 4-year-old Chihuahua is a sweetie, and we are getting along well. The people I bought him from gave me no medical background on him and won't answer my calls. We have had him a month now, and he has had what I call a seizure twice. He starts shaking, then his hindquarters go completely limp. He seems fine in just a few minutes. How serious can this be?

A. It sounds like you have a dog who has some medical problems that the previous owners may have known about, but did not disclose.

Seizures can usually be controlled in dogs with regular medication. It is important to treat them if they are more frequent than one every several months, because they can trigger longer and more violent seizures. Prolonged seizures can turn into a continuous seizure known as status epilepticus, which can be life-threatening.

Dogs who have seizures starting at ages 3 to 8 usually have epilepsy, which are seizures without a known cause. These can usually be well-controlled with medications such as phenobarbital or potassium bromide. Of course, you should start the process with a visit to your veterinarian. Although the medications for a small dog are not expensive, the blood tests and rechecks with your veterinarian can involve some ongoing costs that you should budget for. Many dogs live long, happy lives on seizure medication, but it is important that it be at the correct dose.

If it turns out your dog has been having seizures since he was a puppy, he might have a more serious problem, known as a shunt, which might require surgical correction. Hopefully these seizures are relatively recent, and will respond well to medications.