

# Seizures in Dogs and Cats

Seizures in pets can be alarming to witness, but understanding their causes, symptoms, and treatments can help you provide the best care for your furry companion.

## What Are Seizures?

Seizures are sudden, uncontrolled bursts of electrical activity in the brain that cause temporary changes in behavior, movement, or consciousness. They can occur in both dogs and cats and may happen for various reasons.

## Causes of Seizures

Seizures can be caused by several underlying conditions, including:

- **Idiopathic Epilepsy** – A genetic condition with no identifiable cause, commonly seen in certain dog breeds.
- **Brain Tumors** – Abnormal growths in the brain can lead to seizures.
- **Toxins** – Exposure to substances like chocolate, xylitol, pesticides, or certain plants.
- **Metabolic Disorders** – Liver disease, kidney failure, low blood sugar, or electrolyte imbalances.
- **Infections or Inflammation** – Diseases like meningitis or encephalitis.
- **Head Trauma** – Injuries to the brain can result in seizures.

## Symptoms of Seizures

Seizures can vary in severity, but common signs include:

- Sudden collapse or falling over
- Uncontrolled muscle spasms or paddling movements
- Loss of consciousness
- Drooling, foaming at the mouth
- Vocalization
- Loss of bowel or bladder control
- Temporary confusion or disorientation after the seizure (post-ictal phase)

## Types of Seizures

- **Generalized (Grand Mal) Seizures** – Affect the whole body, typically involving muscle convulsions and loss of consciousness.
- **Focal (Partial) Seizures** – Affect one part of the body, such as twitching in a limb or facial muscles.
- **Cluster Seizures** – Multiple seizures occurring in a short period.
- **Status Epilepticus** – A prolonged seizure lasting more than five minutes, requiring immediate emergency care.

## Diagnosing Seizures

If your pet has had a seizure, diagnostic tests help determine the cause. These may include:

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- Bloodwork to check for metabolic disorders or toxin exposure
- Urinalysis
- Imaging (MRI or CT scan) to evaluate brain abnormalities
- Spinal tap to check for infections or inflammation

## Treatment and Management

Treatment depends on the underlying cause. Options may include:

- **Anti-Seizure Medications** – Such as phenobarbital, potassium bromide, or newer options like levetiracetam (Keppra) or zonisamide.
- **Managing Underlying Conditions** – Treating liver disease, infections, or other causes can reduce seizure frequency.
- **Emergency Care** – If a seizure lasts over five minutes, seek immediate veterinary attention.
- **Lifestyle Adjustments** – Reducing stress, ensuring proper nutrition, and monitoring for seizure triggers.

## When to Seek Veterinary Care

- If your pet has a seizure lasting more than five minutes.
- If they experience multiple seizures in a short period.
- If they are disoriented or not recovering after a seizure.
- If seizures suddenly start without a known cause.

If you have concerns about seizures in your pet, contact your veterinarian. They can help diagnose, treat, and provide guidance on managing your pet's condition.

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