

# Dogs With Epilepsy

Dr. Andrew Jones

I recently had an email from a former client who has a dog that suffers from seizures.

Percy is a 4 year old yellow Lab with epilepsy. He has been on traditional ant-seizure medication, and is not responding very well now. He is suffering from seizures once a month, even on the highest doses of these medications.

My former client asked me if there was anything she could do at home, holistically. She wants to avoid conventional medications as much as she can.

So I sent her the information in this article. You may not have a seizuring pet, but you should be aware of the signs and possible solutions.

## Seizures in Dogs

The signs of seizures vary, but they generally include some of the following symptoms.

Loss or derangement of consciousness, contractions of all the muscles in the body, changes in mental awareness (from non-responsiveness to hallucinations), involuntary urination, defecation, or salivation, or behavioral changes, including non-recognition of owner, viciousness, pacing, and running in circles.

Seizures consist of three parts:

1) The pre-ictal phase (aura) is a period of altered behavior in which the dog may hide, appear nervous, or seek out his owner. He may be restless, nervous, whining, shaking, or salivating. This may last a few seconds to a few hours.

2) The ictal phase is the actual seizure itself. This lasts from a few seconds to about five minutes. During this period, all of the muscles of the body contract strongly. The dog usually falls on his side and seems paralyzed while shaking. His head will be drawn backward. Urination, defecation, and salivation often occur. If it is not over within five minutes, the dog is said to be in 'status epilepticus' or prolonged seizure.

3) During the post-ictal phase, there is confusion, disorientation, salivation, pacing, restlessness, and/or temporary blindness. There is no direct correlation between the severity of the seizure and the duration of the post-ictal phase.

Despite the dramatic signs of a seizure, the dog feels no pain, only bewilderment. Unlike with us humans, dogs do not swallow their tongues. If you put your fingers into his mouth, you're not going to help! You will run a VERY high risk of being bitten - and bitten very badly. Do NOT place your hands in his mouth. The important thing is to keep your dog from falling and hurting himself. As long as he is on the floor (or outside on the ground), there is little chance that he will harm himself.

If the seizure continues for longer than a few minutes, his body temperature will begin to rise. If hyperthermia (over heating) develops along with a seizure, you will have another set of problems.

### Prolonged Seizure (Status Epilepticus)

Status epilepticus is very serious. It is characterized by a seizure that lasts more than five minutes. When this occurs, your dog's life is in danger. Unless intravenous medication is given quickly, death can occur. If your dog is in this state, you should IMMEDIATELY take him in for emergency veterinary care.

### Causes of Seizures

There are many, many causes of seizures. Epilepsy is the most common reason and of least consequence to the dog. The other extreme includes severe diseases such as brain tumors. Fortunately, most seizures are due to epilepsy.

### Possible Solutions

When a seizure occurs, we begin by taking a thorough history concentrating on possible exposure to poisonous or hallucinogenic substances or history of head trauma. We also perform a physical examination, a basic battery of blood tests, and an electrocardiogram (EKG). These tests rule out disorders of the liver, kidneys, heart, electrolytes, and blood sugar level. A heartworm test is performed if your dog is not taking heartworm preventative very regularly.

If these tests are normal and there is no exposure to poison or recent trauma, further diagnostics may be performed depending on the severity and frequency of the seizures. Occasional seizures are of less concern than when the seizures are becoming more severe and frequent. In this instance, a spinal fluid tap and fluid analysis may be performed. Depending on availability, specialized imaging of the head with a CAT scan or MRI might be performed. Fortunately, these additional tests are usually not needed.

To The Veterinarian: We generally prescribe 1-2 weeks of anticonvulsant therapy. If there are no more seizures during that time, the anticonvulsants are gradually discontinued. The next treatment is

determined by how long it takes for another seizure to occur. That may be days, months, or years. At some point, many dogs have seizures frequently enough to justify continuous anticonvulsant therapy. Since that means that medication must be given every 12 to 24 hours for the rest of the dog's life, we do not recommend that until seizures occur about every 30 days or unless they last more than five minutes.

It is important to avoid sudden discontinuation of any anticonvulsant medication. Even normal dogs may be induced to seizure if placed on anticonvulsant medication and then abruptly withdrawn from it. Your veterinarian can outline a schedule for discontinuing the medication.

**Hypoallergenic Diet:** There are reports that show a link between diet and seizures in dogs. Every seizuring pet should at least try a commercial hypoallergenic diet for 12 weeks. You can also make your own elimination diet.

**Melatonin:** This has been used as an anticonvulsant for some dogs. Many dogs only have seizures at night.

**Homeopathic:** *Cicuta virosa*. This can be given to control seizures.

**Serenity:** Many pets with epilepsy will seizure in response to certain stimuli, such as loud noises or bright lights. Get to know what triggers your pet's seizures, and avoid these situations.

Try the above solutions to see what works for your dog. Note how I mention diet as a possibility: if you are not feeding your pet a quality premium NATURAL food, make the switch NOW. This will help with more than just seizures - this will help in almost all areas of disease. Do what you can!

Become a member of my Inner Circle and stay up to date with ways to treat your dog at home. See the link to my site, [theonlinevet](http://theonlinevet.com), below.

Until next time...

#### About the Author

Dr. Andrew Jones, a practicing Veterinarian, has a special interest in alternative, natural pet remedies. Visit his sites: <http://www.veterinarysecretsrevealed.com> and <http://www.theonlinevet.com>.