

SEIZURES

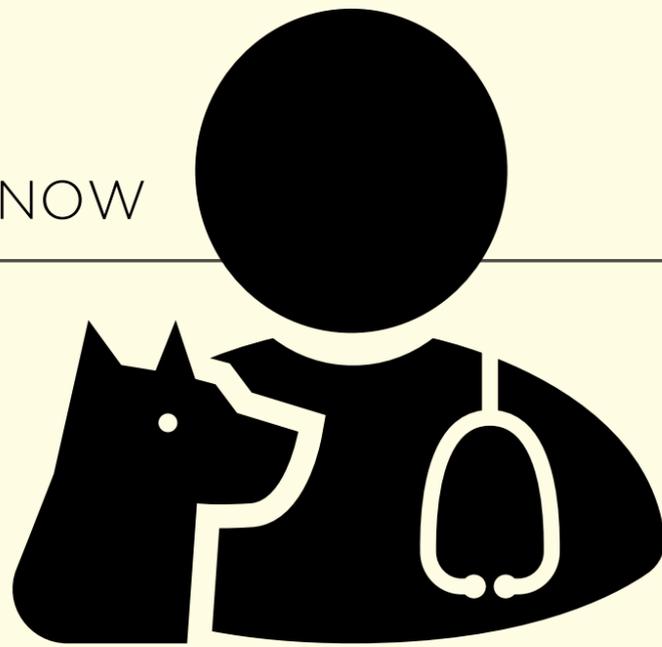
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

What are seizures?

Seizures are one of the more common neurological reasons for dogs seeing their vet. A seizure is more commonly known as a 'fit' and is a temporary, involuntary disturbance of electrical brain function. A seizure is usually accompanied by abnormal behaviour and movement.

What is epilepsy?

Epilepsy is the term used to describe the repeat occurrence of seizures. In epilepsy, in each episode the seizures can be single or may occur in groups (clusters), and they can occur unpredictably and infrequently, or fairly predictably and at regular intervals.



Treatment

Anticonvulsant medications are available for dogs and may ultimately be prescribed by your vet. However, they do tend to only be prescribed if a dog suffers from severe epilepsy, as the drugs themselves can have negative effects.

Symptoms of a seizure

There are three separate parts to a seizure:

1. The aura or pre-ictal phase is a period of unusual behaviour before a seizure in which your dog may hide, appear afraid or disorientated, or may seek you out. He may also be restless, nervous, whine a lot, shake or salivate excessively. This can last from a few seconds to several hours. In dogs with epilepsy, owners quickly learn to spot these signs in advance and ensure that their dog is in safe surroundings prior to the seizure commencing.

2. The next phase is the seizure itself and can last from a few seconds up to about five minutes. During a seizure, the dog may be unconscious or he may just have altered consciousness. If the dog experiences a full-blown seizure (referred to as a grand-mal seizure), he will lose consciousness and all of the muscles will

contract spastically and erratically. The dog usually falls on his side and moves his legs chaotically and stiffly. The head is commonly pulled backwards during the seizure, and urination, defecation and salivation may all occur. If the dog does not stop seizing after five minutes, he is said to be in status epilepticus. **This is an emergency and requires immediate treatment by a vet.** Some seizures on the other hand will be more subtle, where the dog may have hallucinations or seem mentally 'absent'.

3. During the post-ictal phase (the period immediately after the seizure), the dog is commonly disorientated, confused, salivating, pacing, restless or may even experience temporary blindness. There is no real link between the severity of the seizure and the length of the post-ictal phase.

When do seizures occur?

Seizures often occur at times of changing brain activity, for instance when falling asleep or waking up, or at times of excitement (commonly pre-walk or pre-feeding). They can also occur with irregular feeding routines, extreme anxiety or extreme fatigue.

Pets' average body temperature

Dogs  37.8 to 39.2°C

Cats  37.8 to 39.3°C

Birds  38.8 to 39.5°C

Rabbits  38.5 to 40°C

Guinea Pigs  37.5 to 39.5°C

Go to www.coolmags.co.za/seizures to download a PDF 

What can I do?

01 Remain calm and talk to your dog in a calming and reassuring voice.

02 If you notice that your dog is in a pre-ictal phase, you should try to ensure that he is in safe surroundings, ideally on the floor, and that you are watching him.

03 During the seizure, it is best to stay with your dog, but refrain from trying to move or restrain him, unless he is in immediate danger in his current surroundings. Dogs do not swallow their tongues during seizures, and putting your fingers or another object in the mouth will only serve to injure you and perhaps your dog.

04 If the seizure goes on for more than two minutes, try to cool your dog using a fan or by opening windows.

05 If a seizure goes on for more than five minutes, you must call your vet immediately or take your dog to the nearest vet. This is an emergency.

06 If you believe that your dog has experienced a seizure, you must take him to the vet for examination. Your vet will want to investigate to find the cause.

Breeds that are more prone to epilepsy include:

- Beagles
- German Shepherds
- Irish Setters
- Poodles
- Saint Bernards
- Springer Spaniels
- Malamutes
- Huskies
- Cocker Spaniels
- Collies
- Dachshunds
- Golden Retrievers
- Labrador Retrievers

SOURCE: PETCOACH.CO

Causes of epilepsy and seizures can be:

