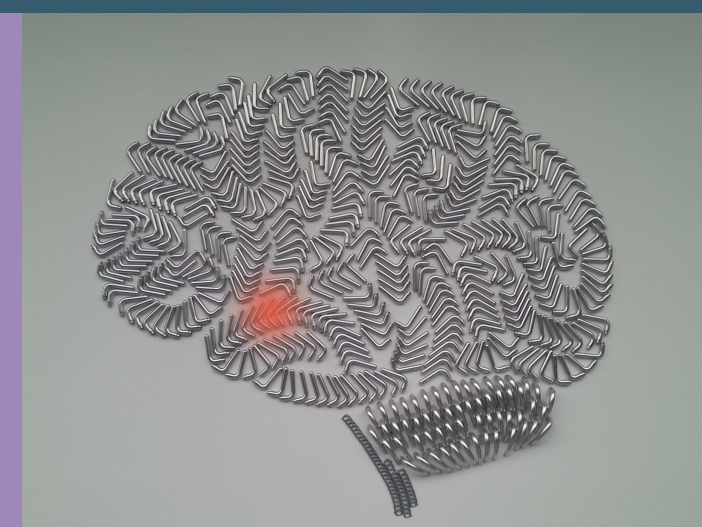


# WHAT TYPE OF SEIZURES DO I HAVE?

Seizures can be classified by: (1) where they start, (2) their effect on awareness, and (3) their effect on the body.

## FOCAL ONSET

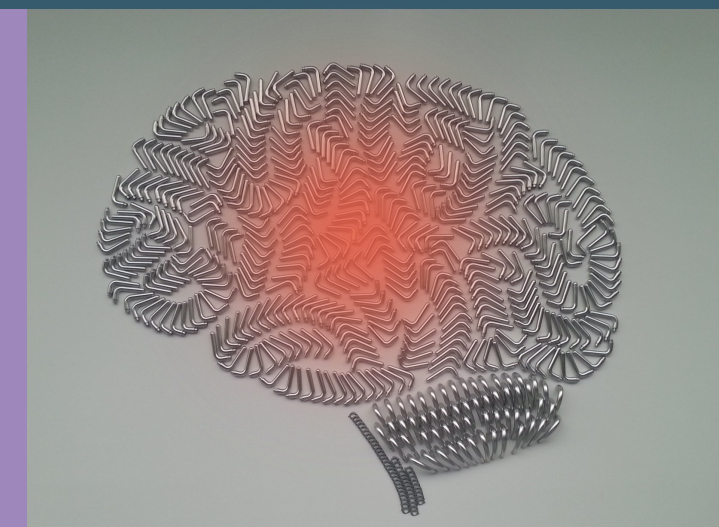
Seizures start in one area of the brain. Only one side of the brain is affected.



1

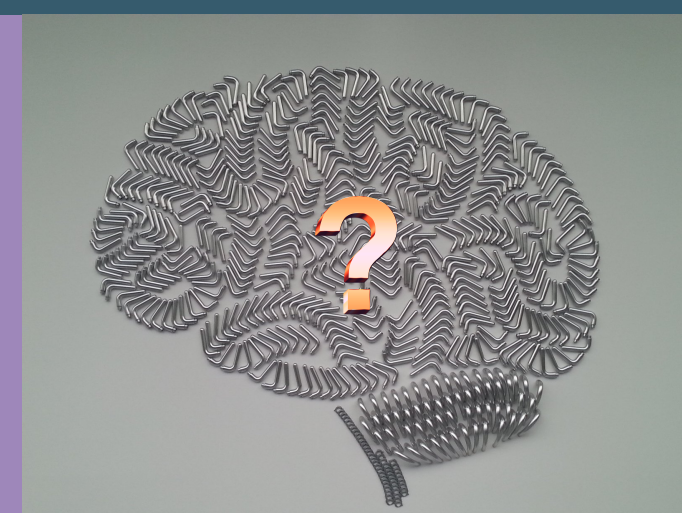
## GENERALIZED ONSET

Seizures start in different areas at the same time. Both sides of the brain are affected.



## UNKNOWN ONSET

The origin of seizures is unknown, but eventually may be diagnosed as focal or generalized.



2

### Aware

Person is aware of themselves and environment during the seizure

### Impaired awareness

Person is unaware of their surroundings during the seizure

3

### Motor seizures

The muscles of the body stiffen or weaken temporarily

### Non-motor seizures

A change in one of the five senses (taste, smell, sight, hearing, touch)

You may not know what type of seizures you have, and many people have more than one type. To learn more about your seizures and your treatment options, talk to your health care provider.

Visit [ontarioepilepsyguidelines.ca](http://ontarioepilepsyguidelines.ca)  
for more information



THE EPILEPSY RESEARCH PROGRAM  
OF THE ONTARIO BRAIN INSTITUTE

# SEIZURE TYPES

## FOCAL: AWARE OR IMPAIRED AWARENESS

### Motor

Automatisms  
Atonic  
Clonic  
Epileptic spasms  
Hyperkinetic  
Myoclonic  
Tonic

### Non-motor

Autonomic  
Behaviour arrest  
Cognitive  
Emotional  
Sensory

## GENERALIZED: IMPAIRED AWARENESS

### Motor

Tonic clonic  
Tonic  
Clonic  
Myoclonic  
Myoclonic tonic clonic  
Myoclonic atonic  
Atonic  
Epileptic spasms

### Non-motor (also called absence)

Typical  
Atypical  
Myoclonic  
Eyelid myoclonia

## UNKNOWN

### Motor

Tonic clonic  
Epileptic spasms

### Non-motor

Autonomic  
Behaviour arrest

### Unclassified

**Automatisms:** Involuntary, repetitive movements, such as lip-smacking

**Atonic:** Sudden loss of muscle strength (also called drop seizures)

**Clonic:** Jerking movements on both sides of the body with a loss of consciousness

**Epileptic spasms:** A series of sudden flexion or extension (or mixed flexion-extension) movements of specific muscles (such as arms and legs pulling into the body)

**Hyperkinetic:** Involves irregular, complex movements of the limb and trunk, such as rocking or pedaling

**Myoclonic:** Rapid jerking movements of a muscle or group of muscles

**Tonic:** Sudden muscle stiffness or contractions

**Autonomic:** Involves changes in involuntary functions, such as blood pressure or bowel/bladder function

**Behaviour arrest:** Movement stops for the duration of the seizure

**Cognitive:** Involves changes in cognition, such as inability to speak or read, loss of memory, or sense of déjà vu

**Emotional:** Involves changes in mood or emotion, such as fear, anxiety or laughing

**Sensory:** Involves the senses, such as hallucinations, strange odors, or a pins and needles sensation

**Tonic clonic:** A seizure with both tonic and clonic phases (convulsions) and a loss of consciousness

**Myoclonic tonic clonic:** Begins with jerking of the limbs followed by tonic and clonic phases

**Myoclonic atonic:** A myoclonic seizure followed by an atonic seizure

**Typical:** Blanking out or staring into space for a few seconds

**Atypical:** Similar to typical seizures, but may last longer or involve automatisms

**Eyelid myoclonia:** Rapid and repeated jerks of the eyelids

