



Please know that the HIE Help Center is owned by a medical malpractice law firm that focuses on cases involving HIE and other birth injuries. We try to provide useful medical information to our readers, but we cannot provide treatments or medical advice. If you think your child may be having a seizure, please call 911/your country's emergency number or your doctor.

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One of the most common signs that a baby might have [hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy \(HIE\)](#) is the presence of seizures after birth. These can cause involuntary jerking motions and visible symptoms, but in some cases, the signs are very subtle. The best (and sometimes only) way to detect a baby having a seizure is using an EEG monitor to look for abnormal electrical activity in the brain. About half of newborn seizures are *subtle seizures*, which can be hard to see. An additional quarter of infant seizures are *clonic seizures*, marked by a slow rhythmic jerking or twitching of one body part. 5% of infants have *tonic seizures*, marked by sustained contractions, sometimes accompanied by rolling eyes and apnea. The most severe type of seizures is *myoclonic*, because myoclonic seizures indicate very severe brain damage. These are marked by very fast twitching or jerking, and are most often found in premature babies.

Seizures can actually worsen brain damage in cases of hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy.



### What Do Seizures Look Like in a Baby?

Seizures may manifest differently in different babies. In addition to jerking or twitching motions, a baby having a seizure can show the following signs (among others):

- Apnea (a time period during which they stop breathing)
- Repetitive movements of the face
- “Bicycling,” which appears as pedaling motions of the feet
- Stiff or tight muscles groups
- Abnormal bending or stretching of the arms or legs

### Recognizing the Risk Factors for Seizure Activity

Because seizures are associated with [cognitive difficulties](#) and [cerebral palsy](#), recognizing when they occur is crucial to making sure your child gets proper treatment. While the *diagnosis* of seizures is carried out by medical professionals using tests such as EEGs, MRIs, and CT scans, parents can learn about when seizures are more likely to occur and bring up any concerns they may have.

If a baby is born not breathing, has a low APGAR score, or needs to go to the NICU after delivery, these are signs that the child is at risk for seizures. The risk factors for seizures are very similar to the risk factors for hypoxic-ischemic encephalopathy; please see our page on risk factors for HIE [here](#).

### Infant Seizures: Next Steps

If you see signs of seizure in your infant, you should call 911 immediately, especially if it is their first seizure. If they get diagnosed with a seizure disorder and have frequent episodes, you should discuss with your doctor how to respond to and treat your child’s seizures. Also, during a seizure, make sure that your infant is away from anything that could cause injury, such as hard objects or something that could get stuck in their mouth. For more detailed tips on seizure first aid, click [here](#).



Once you get to the hospital and the baby is examined, your doctor may prescribe medications or recommend other means of controlling/preventing future seizures.

If your child is diagnosed with a seizure disorder, there are many resources that can help you. The [Epilepsy Foundation](#) has a lot of useful information on caring for a child with frequent seizures, as well as resources for all ages – everything from summer camps for kids with epilepsy to driving safety. They have a toll-free helpline in both English (1-800-332-1000) and Spanish (1-866-748-8008).

For more information on infant seizures and how to care for a child with a seizure disorder, check out our related resources (below).

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### *Related Resources:*

[Frequently Asked Questions About Infant Seizures](#)

[Seizure Dogs](#)

### About the HIE Help Center

The HIE Help Center is run by [Reiter & Walsh ABC Law Centers](#), a medical malpractice firm exclusively handling cases involving HIE and other birth injuries. Our lawyers have over 100 years of combined experience with this type of law, and have been advocating for children with HIE and related disabilities since the firm's inception in 1997.

We are passionate about helping families obtain the compensation necessary to cover their extensive medical bills, loss of wages (if one or both parents have to miss work in order to care for their child), assistive technology, and other necessities.



If you suspect your child's HIE may have been caused by medical negligence, please contact us today to learn more about pursuing a case. We provide free legal consultations, during which we will inform you of your [legal options](#) and answer any questions you have. Moreover, you would pay nothing throughout the entire legal process unless we obtain a favorable settlement.

You are also welcome to reach out to us with inquiries that are not related to malpractice. We cannot provide individualized medical advice, but we're happy to track down informational resources for you.

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