

# Focal aware seizures

In focal aware seizures (FAS), previously called [simple partial seizures](#), the person is conscious (aware and alert) and will usually know that something is happening and will remember the seizure afterwards. Some people find their focal aware seizures hard to put into words.

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Simple partial seizures are usually divided into categories depending on the type of symptoms the person experiences: Motor seizures: These cause a change in muscle activity. For example, a person may have abnormal movements such as jerking of a finger or stiffening of part of the body. The movements may spread, either staying on one side of the body or extending to both sides. Other examples are weakness, which can even affect speech, and coordinated actions such as laughter or automatic hand movements. Sensory seizures: These cause changes in any one of the senses. People with sensory seizures may smell or taste things that aren't there; hear clicking, ringing, or a person's voice when there is no actual sound; or feel a sensation of "pins and needles" or numbness. Seizures may even be painful for some patients. They may feel as if they are floating or spinning in space. They may have visual hallucinations, seeing things that aren't there (a spot of light, a scene with people). They also may experience illusions—distortions of true sensations. For instance, they may believe that a parked car is moving farther away, or that a person's voice is muffled when it's actually clear. Autonomic seizures: These cause changes in the part of the nervous system that automatically controls bodily functions. These common seizures may include strange or unpleasant sensations in the stomach, chest, or head; changes in the heart rate or breathing; sweating; or goose bumps. Psychic seizures: These seizures change how people think, feel, or experience things. They may have problems with memory, garbled speech, an inability to find the right word, or trouble understanding spoken or written language. They may suddenly feel emotions like fear, depression, or happiness with no outside reason. Some may feel as though they are outside their body or may have feelings of *déjà vu* ("I've been through this before") or *jamais vu* ("This is new to me"— even though the setting is really familiar). Who is at risk for simple partial seizures? Anybody can get them. They may be more likely in people who have had a head injury, brain infection, stroke, or brain tumor but most of the time the cause is unknown. What is it like to have a simple partial seizure? When people have simple partial seizures, they are fully awake, alert and able to interact throughout the seizure. Overall, these seizures are brief lasting less than 2 minutes Medical disorders such as, stomach disorders or a pinched nerve can cause some similar symptoms. Hallucinations can accompany psychiatric illness or the use of certain drugs. And some symptoms (such as *déjà vu*) are experienced by almost everyone at some time. Whether the symptoms represent simple partial seizures depends on how often they occur and whether they are associated with other episodic changes or other seizure types. What happens after a simple partial seizure? When a simple partial seizure ends, the person more often than not simply continues doing whatever they were doing before it started. If the simple partial seizure is an aura (a warning) a stronger seizure with loss of consciousness may follow. No first aid is needed for a simple partial seizure. If someone has simple partial seizures, how often will they occur? It depends. Some people may have just one seizure and others may have several. How can I tell if someone is having a simple partial seizure? Because the person is fully alert and able to interact, someone may not be able to tell when a person is having a simple partial seizure unless the person tells them. How are simple partial seizures diagnosed? A complete medical history and physical examination can help to rule out other possible causes of the symptoms and assess the likelihood of epilepsy. Although EEGs are also helpful they may not always show an abnormality during a simple partial seizure? How are simple partial seizures treated? There are several medicines, a device (Vagus nerve stimulator), surgery and diet that can help prevent further simple partial seizures from

occurring.

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