

Turning Point Services

Rescue Medication for Seizures

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What are Rescue Meds

Some fast-acting medicines can be used 'as needed' to stop seizures. The four medications listed below are the primary ones we see with our clients and are all in the same drug family and work in the same manner but are prepared in different forms and are given differently.

Lorazepam (Ativan) is usually given by the buccal or sublingual method.

Diazepam is usually given in the rectal form Diastat.

Midazolam is given nasal or buccal.

Clonazepam is occasionally used and is given by the buccal or sublingual method.

Oral Medication Definitions

Oral or by mouth: This usually means swallowing the pill with water. This should be done only if the person is awake and alert and is not at risk for choking on the pill or water.

Sublingual: This means that the pill is placed under the tongue where it will dissolve and be absorbed into the bloodstream. The person should not drink or eat anything until the medicine is gone.

Buccal: This means that the medicine can be placed in the mouth between the cheeks and the nearby gum where it will dissolve and be absorbed into the bloodstream. Usually, medicines that can be taken sublingually can also be taken buccally. The person should not drink or eat anything until the medicine is gone

What is needed in the order?

Name of the drug.

The strength of the medication and how much to take at each dose.

When it should be given - for example after a certain number of seizures or after clusters of seizures that last a certain period of time.

How often it can be taken and how much in one day.

Times when it should NOT be taken.

How to take it – swallow, sublingual or buccal, nasal or rectal.

Remember

- Talk to the family and your supervisor about the best way to use rescue seizure medicine.
- Make sure you have a specific plan on when to use it and when not to.
- Include information on how to give these medicines on your Seizure Plan.
- Always make sure you have the rescue medication with the client at all times. You can't leave during a seizure to go find the medication.

How to give oral Lorazepam, Diazepam or Clonazepam

Either medicine may be swallowed whole with water or another liquid.

Pills or tablets can be dissolved under the tongue or between the cheek and the gum.

If the oral solution is prescribed, use a specially marked dropper that comes with the solution to measure the correct dose. The solution can be mixed with liquid or soft food, or put under the tongue or between the cheek and gum.

It's important to follow specific directions and have a plan on just how much to take, when to use it, and how often it can be used. Then write down each time you take a dose so you can make sure that you don't take too much.

How to give Midazolam

Midazolam comes in a single dose vial and the medication must be drawn up into the syringe provided with the medication. The pharmacist may dispense into prefilled syringes in which case you not have to prepare dosage.

Get medication including syringe

Remove protective cap from vial

Using provided syringe draw plunger back to allow air to enter the syringe.

Puncture the soft top of the vial with needle of syringe and push air into vial.

Turn vial upside down with needle clearly within liquid and pull back syringe slowly allowing medication to fill syringe.

Remove syringe from vial when all medication is in syringe.

Discard needle

If nasal slowly push plunger allowing medication to slowly squirt into nose.

If buccal allow medication to trickle into side of cheek.

How to give Diastat

Put the person on their side where they can't fall.

Get medicine. (Diastat is in single dose syringe)

Remove the cap from the applicator and lubricate applicator tip with the lubricate included in the container.

Turn person so they are facing you and bend upper leg forward to expose rectum.

Separate buttocks to expose rectum and gently insert the syringe tip into the rectum (aim toward belly button.)

Slowly count to 3 while depressing the plunger until it stops.

Count to 3 again with applicator still in rectum.

Count to 3 again as you slowly withdraw the applicator.

Keep the person on their side and note time of application.

Call 911 (TPS employees must call 911 if employee gives Diastat.)

How long does it take to work? What side effects should I watch for?

All rescue medications discussed act quickly in the brain to stop seizures.

Diazepam gets into the brain quickest, but Lorazepam and Midazolam tends to last longer and will help seizures over a longer period of time.

Side effects may occur, such as: weakness, dizziness, headache, memory problems, fatigue, sleepiness or sedation, unsteady walking, respiratory depression, or low blood pressure.

Rare side effects include: agitation and mood alteration. Shallow and slow respirations.

Remember:

Be sure to review the plan with your Q on what to give, how much, and how often.

Write down how much you give and when and notify family immediately

Get emergency medical attention if any serious problems occur with these medicines.

If the person is sleepy after taking the medicine, let them rest for a while.

Watch the person to make sure that the seizures have stopped. How long this may take will depend on their seizure frequency before the medicine was given and their usual seizure pattern.

Call for emergency medical help (usually 911) if:

Seizure activity continues after taking the medicine as prescribed by the doctor.

A convulsive seizure lasts longer than 5 minutes, even if the rescue medicine has been given.

Seizures look different than before.

Seizures occur one right after the other.

Changes in breathing or skin color are seen.

Unusual or serious problems occur.

You are worried or bothered by how the person is doing.

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