

# MOVEMENT IMITATORS OF SEIZURES

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Conditions that imitate seizures can be grouped according to which aspect of seizure they mimic. One category of seizure imitators causes abnormal movements.

Many epileptic seizures involve abnormal movements, such as twisting or twitching. But other movement disorders, including conditions such as tremors, Parkinson's disease, dystonia, chorea and tics, also involve odd postures and movements. People who have these movement disorders do not show the concurrent EEG brainwave changes characteristic of an epileptic seizure, which can help to distinguish these conditions from an actual epileptic seizure.

Let's look at how each movement disorder typically manifests itself.

A tremor is rhythmical shaking of one body part. It looks like this. If a tremor comes and goes, it may be misdiagnosed as a partial seizure with motor manifestations.



Dystonia is the continued maintenance of an abnormal posture, such as this. Dystonia can be confusing to a diagnostician because some seizures include dystonia as a symptom. Then again, dystonia can also be a movement disorder on its own, completely unrelated to epilepsy.

Another movement disorder, chorea, comes from the Greek word for "dance." It manifests itself as if the hands are doing a little dance or fidget. A person with chorea looks extra fidgety and may try to cover up a chorea movement with seemingly normal activity like brushing their hair.

Athetosis is a movement disorder that also comes from the Greek, meaning "swimming," and a person with athetosis makes arms or legs movements like he or she is swimming. Now chorea and athetosis can be combined into a condition called choreoathetosis.



Another seizure movement imitator, hemiballismus, is a rare condition that shows up as violent flinging movements usually restricted to one side of the body.

Finally, tics, which are habitual quick abnormal movements, can mimic seizures. Tics seem to relieve tension and are semi-voluntary, meaning that people can inhibit them, at least for a while, with effort.

These movement disorders can all present in a manner that imitates the symptoms of a seizure. But remember that not everything that shakes is a seizure. If you or someone close to you has seizures or a look-alike, please seek medical attention to get the correct diagnosis and treatment.