

## **Facts about Seizure Response Dog Guides** **Special Skills Dogs of Canada**

Although some dogs do learn to detect seizures before they occur, it is not known how and why some dogs seem to have this ability. It is not known if the dogs react to a chemical or physical change in the person before an epileptic episode.

Seizure Response Dogs are trained to **react** to the seizures and are **unable to predict** them. These Dog Guides are trained to react to the person's physical cues (dropping, convulsions etc) once the seizure has started and to get people's attention by barking. Here are some frequently asked questions which might help you decide if a Seizure Response Dog Guide is right for you or not.

**1. Can the dog prevent me from walking towards dangerous areas (traffic, stairs, pools, etc)?**

Dogs do not have the same concept of danger as humans, so our dogs are trained to heel (follow) with the person who is holding the leash. The dog has no way of knowing if you are crossing the street voluntarily or involuntarily.

**2. Will the dog be able to prevent me from falling or help break my fall?**

No. As the dogs are not trained to detect seizures before they occur, they are not able to predict a fall. It is also potentially dangerous to the dog's health to be trained to break a person's fall.

**3. Can the dog leave my side to go get help?**

Yes, but only inside. Our dogs can be trained to get a person on command but this skill can only be used inside your home. The dog can get a family member who is in a different room/floor if you are not feeling well. The dogs will not be able to get help when you are in an outside area. This is because dogs do not have the same concept of danger that humans do, and could potentially be injured if they had to cross a street looking for a person to help.

**4. What types of seizures are the dogs trained to react to?**

Tonic clonic (Grand mal) and Atonic seizures (drop attack) are two types of seizures that we train our dogs to react to. The person falling and/or convulsing is the dog's cue to start barking and do so until the person's seizure has subsided, or someone comes to offer assistance. Absence seizures (Petit mal) are seizures that the dogs will not react to due to the lack of obvious change in

behavior. To the dog, it is no different than you watching T.V. or day dreaming. Depending on the person, we train the dogs to react to obvious cues; dropping, convulsions, etc. As explained in question 1, we do not train the dogs for walk away seizures.

**5. Can the dog take me home after a seizure if I'm confused and disoriented?**

The dog is trained to follow you, not guide you. Dogs do not have the cognitive ability to safely guide their handler home.

**6. Will the dog protect me if someone with ill intentions was approaching me during a seizure?**

Our dogs are trained to not have any form of aggression towards people as they will be out and about with you at all times in public places. We train the dogs to not become protective of you as this may cause rescue workers to be unable to assist you if your dog is showing aggressive behaviors. However, a dog barking and drawing attention to you might be a deterrent to people with bad intentions.

**7. How soon after I get the dog can I expect the dog to work for me?**

The more you practice with your dog and the more consistent you are, the better your dog will work for you. It will take approximately six months to one year after graduation for you and your dog to develop a strong bond. All people and dogs will adapt differently to new situations - some will bond faster, and some will take a little longer. It also depends on the time you spend working and practicing with your dog. This also includes play time, grooming, feeding, walking and time spent interacting. With any training, it is imperative that the trained behaviours be practiced. If you stop working with your dog, the dog will stop working and will not respond when you have a seizure.