

COPING WITH **CANINE** SEIZURES

By Amy Snow and Nancy Zidonis



Discover how **acupressure** and **ice** can work together to help reduce the **severity** and **duration** of **seizures** in dogs.

Seizures in dogs are scary, especially when they happen for the first time. A seizing dog gets a glassy look in his eyes, then falls on his side and begins to paddle uncontrollably. If your dog ever has a seizure, the first step is a prompt trip to the veterinarian to determine the cause. Once he's been diagnosed and a treatment or management plan has been put in place, a simple acupressure technique you can do at home may help reduce the severity and length of your dog's seizure episodes, should they occur again.

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT SEIZURES

Causes: Seizures have many possible causes, which is why it's so important to see a vet. Genetics, exposure to toxins, distemper, kidney or liver disease, bug bites, hormonal imbalances, age-

related factors, insufficient electrolytes, "hyper" or "hypo" conditions, Lyme disease, abnormal brain development or brain damage are some conditions that can trigger seizures in a dog. However, many canine seizure disorders are considered "idiopathic" (of unknown origin) in nature.

Whatever the cause, seizures involve a misfiring of neurons, most often in the cerebrum of the brain. There appears to be a chemical imbalance of neurotransmitters. Seizures cover the entire spectrum from mild to severe in strength, duration and frequency.

Signs and symptoms: Josh was at the park with Pebbles, his recently-rescued, one-year-old beagle, when the dog started to stumble and salivate. He knew something was wrong and

SEIZURES FROM A TCM PERSPECTIVE

When your dog is seizing, the involuntary movement of his body and limbs can be likened to a tree being blown by a furiously strong wind. In Chinese medicine, a seizure disorder is characterized as “Internal Wind Heat” because it looks a lot like wind blowing and lashing around inside the body.

In Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), the Liver organ system is responsible for the harmonious flow of life-promoting energy called “chi”. The Liver is highly vulnerable to the invasion of Wind. It is thought that when Wind invades the body, Liver chi is disrupted and the body can succumb to internal chaos in the form of a seizure.

Seizures are considered Hot in nature; the ancient Chinese knew that a strong Wind creates Heat. This type of Heat rising in the body can endanger the brain, leading to loss of consciousness and actually “burning” its neurological connections.

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Recent studies by TCM practitioners have shown that placing an ice pack directly on Governing Vessel 14 (GV 14) at the onset of a seizure can reduce the duration and severity of an episode. They suggest that ice can also minimize the frequency of seizures. So if your own dog is prone to seizures, placing an ice pack on GV 14 (see chart for the acupoints location) can help avoid a seizure entirely, or at least reduce its strength and length.

Safety tip.

When your dog has a seizure, **STAY CALM** and keep your hands away from his mouth. Because dogs often clench their jaws during a seizure, he could **UNINTENTIONALLY** bite you.

This technique of combining an acupressure point with the application of ice has another advantage. It can help reduce the quantity of medication needed to control the frequency of your dog's seizures; too much medication can negatively affect his quality of life.

When a dog experiences seizures, the goal is to find the best way to restore his health and well-being. By working with your veterinarian while using this ice and acupressure method, you can bring the best of both worlds to the management of your dog's condition.