EPILEPSY SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Since seizures can come without warning, people with epilepsy may be at higher risk of accidents that can cause head injuries, fractures, bruises, drowning, cuts and burns. But you can help minimize these risks and live an active life by taking some extra safety measures and informing people close to you about your condition.¹

TIPS FOR PEOPLE WITH EPILEPSY

If you have epilepsy, you can still do most activities as long as you take some extra precautions:

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1. Carry identification with you at all times, particularly when venturing out alone. Make sure it includes your name, address, an emergency telephone number of a close friend or relative, your doctor’s contact information, a list of your medications and information about your condition. This information will help others around you provide assistance if you have a seizure.

2. Avoid potentially dangerous places and things at home and work, such as sharp instruments, hot appliances or heavy machinery.

3. Avoid alcohol because it could interfere with your medication.

4. Do not drive if you have seizures that are not controlled by medication because having a seizure behind the wheel could result in serious injuries to yourself and others. Check with your doctor and local authorities to determine whether you can drive safely and legally with your condition.

5. Take extra precautions to make activities like swimming and cycling safer. For example, only go swimming with a competent swimmer who knows about your condition and always wear a helmet while riding a bike. And be sure to talk to your doctor before starting any new sport or activity to make sure it is safe, particularly if your seizures are not well controlled.

For more safety tips, read Living with Epilepsy.

TIPS FOR FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Friends, family members and coworkers of people with epilepsy should learn to recognize symptoms of seizures because they are often the first point of contact. Common symptoms include staring and unresponsiveness, twitching of the arms or legs, body stiffening and shaking, falling down, rhythmic but jerky muscle movements, and loss of consciousness or awareness.
SPORTS, LEISURE ACTIVITIES AND TRAVEL

People with epilepsy can participate in most sports and leisure activities by taking a few safety precautions. For example, you can go swimming, but you should take a good swimmer with you and notify a lifeguard about your condition if there is one.  

When traveling, it’s a good idea to pack extra epilepsy medicine in case yours is lost or stolen or your return home gets unexpectedly delayed. If you have to make a long journey across time-zones, the lack of sleep and fatigue might trigger a seizure. That’s why it’s best to travel with someone who is familiar with your condition.  

WHAT TO DO WHEN SOMEONE HAS A SEIZURE If you have a friend or family member with epilepsy, it’s important to follow these guidelines in the event of a seizure.

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<td>Do gently roll the person onto one side. Do put something soft under the person’s head. Do loosen tight neckwear. Do move dangerous objects like furniture if the person is moving. Do time the seizures and observe the person closely so that you can provide details about the event. Do keep calm and reassure others nearby. Do call for an ambulance if the person is injured or has another seizure without fully recovering from the first seizure.</td>
<td>Don't try to put your fingers or anything else in the person’s mouth. It is physically impossible for someone to “swallow” his or her tongue during a seizure. Don't try to restrain someone having a seizure. Don't attempt to rouse the person by shouting at or shaking him or her. Don’t leave the person until medical personnel arrives.</td>
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