

Safety for People with Epilepsy

People with epilepsy can live long and healthy lives. This health fact tells you what you can do to stay safe in the event of a seizure. It will also tell you how to decrease your risk of future seizures.

Epilepsy is a chronic medical condition that often can be controlled with medicine or other treatment plans. Other treatments include lifestyle changes or surgery. If you are still having seizures after one year or despite trials of 2 medicines, please discuss with your doctor.

First Aid

Stay with the person who is having a seizure and time it if you can. Keep the person safe. This may involve moving the person or nearby objects to avoid harm. Move the person to their side if they are not awake.

When to Call 911

- If a seizure lasts more than 5 minutes
- If the person has repeated seizures
- If the seizure occurs in water
- If the person is injured or if they ask for help

Do not put anything into the mouth of a person who is having a seizure. Do not try to restrain the person.

Safety

Most people with epilepsy can enjoy life in the same way as people who don't have seizures. We suggest that you be careful around activities that could cause injury if you have a seizure. Do not swim alone, avoid working on heights or ladders.

To Prevent Seizures

- Get regular sleep
- Take your medicine as prescribed
- Manage your stress
- Avoid alcohol and other drugs

Some people have triggers for their seizures such as loud noises and flashing lights. Avoid any clear triggers.

Driving

Most states have laws about driving after a seizure. In Wisconsin, any event that causes loss of awareness or bodily control would prohibit driving for at least 90 days. The law states that people who have had a seizure or other loss of consciousness should report themselves to the DMV. They will let you know the next steps to take and when you can drive again.

SUDEP

People with epilepsy have a higher risk of death. This is called Sudden Unexplained Death in Epilepsy (SUDEP). About 1 in 1000 people with epilepsy will die from SUDEP each year. People can also die from prolonged seizures or status epilepticus. Take your medicine as prescribed, talk with your doctor about new health conditions and follow your treatment plan to help reduce your risk.

References

epilepsy.com
MakingSenseofSUDEP.org
wisconsindmv.gov

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright ©8/2019. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#8096.