

EPILEPSY AND HOME SAFETY

WHAT IS EPILEPSY?

Epilepsy is a neurological disorder of the brain that affects over 3 million Americans with about 200,000 new cases diagnosed each year. The symptoms of epilepsy are sudden recurrent seizures, loss of consciousness, or convulsions caused by a sudden overload of electrical activity in the brain. Epilepsy is usually diagnosed after a person has had more than one seizure.

EPILEPSY AND RISK

Risk is the chance of something happening that has the potential to cause harm or injury. Sometimes taking a risk can mean trying something new and challenging yourself in a positive way. But risk can also mean the chance of injury, danger or damage to someone's health. Good seizure control and staying safe are two important ways to help a person with epilepsy reduce risks.

Often the best way to reduce risks due to seizures is to reduce, or stop seizures from happening. For most people this is by taking anti-epileptic drugs (AEDs). The second way to reduce risks associated with epilepsy is to ensure that the home is safe.

TIPS FOR REDUCING THE RISK OF SEIZURES

- Take anti-seizure medications in the dose and frequency prescribed
- Avoid heavy alcohol use
- Do not use illegal drug
- Get at least 8 hours of sleep a night
- Avoid taking any drugs that interfere with seizures.



HOME SAFETY TIPS FOR PERSONS WITH EPILEPSY

Before adopting any measures to help an individual remain safe in the home, be sure you know the type of seizures the individual experiences, their frequency, their triggers, and where they occur most often. This information will be in the decision about which safety measures will be most beneficial to the individual with epilepsy.

GENERAL SAFETY TIPS

- Use only shatterproof glass for mirrors
- Avoid glass tables
- Avoid scatter rugs, instead consider large carpets or wall-to-wall carpet
- Secure heavy items, televisions, computers, other things that could fall off of tables

- Use fireplace screens at all times, do not leave persons prone to seizures in room alone with fire in the fireplace.
- Choose space heaters that do not tip over
- Avoid clutter in rooms; make sure there is room to fall safely
- Using protective covers on sharp edges of furniture, or having furniture with rounded edges, may avoid injury if you fall against it.

BATHROOM SAFETY STEPS

- Use non-skid strips in tub or shower
- Use shower curtains instead of a shower door
- Keep electrical appliances away from the sink or bathtub
- Use tub rails or grab bars
- Use a shower chair with arms or sit in the tub and use a hand held shower nozzle
- Have bathroom doors swing outward instead of inward so that they can be opened in case someone falls

BEDROOM SAFETY TIPS

- If there is a risk of falling out of bed during a seizure, have the person sleep in a low-level bed or futon where there is less distance to fall, which may reduce the chance of injury.
- Sleeping in the middle of a large bed can also reduce the risk of falling out of bed during a seizure.
- Padded bed rails may help prevent a person from falling out of bed but there are risks associated with their use. A person's arms or legs can become trapped or injured between the mattress and the rails.
- Putting the bed against the wall also may keep a person from falling out of bed but this arrangement carries the risk of suffocation if the person becomes trapped between the mattress and the walls.
- Some people who have seizures during the night have a bed alarm that detects when they have a seizure.
- Some people who have seizures while they are asleep use safety or 'anti-suffocation' pillows. The pillows have small holes in so that if you are sleeping face down you may be able to breathe more easily.

Finally, Ask for help on adaptive aids for home safety. The person's primary care physician may be able to offer literature and guidance on adaptive aides for the individual or refer the person to a rehabilitation specialist who specializes in adaptive equipment and safety measures for persons with epilepsy.

REFERENCES:

www.epilepsy.com

<http://www.epilepsy.com/get-help/staying-safe/managing-epilepsy-seizures-infographic>