

# Living with epilepsy



People with epilepsy can and do live normal lives. Many athletes, authors, politicians, entrepreneurs, doctors, parents, and artists have epilepsy.

Epilepsy is a brain disorder that causes seizures (fits). The cause remains unknown in almost 50 per cent of people. Seizure types vary greatly and while good treatments are available, some 20 per cent of people do not get complete control of their seizures.

**There is great risk that a person with epilepsy will be injured during a seizure at home, however, this can be greatly reduced by taking some simple safety precautions:**

- Carpet the floors with heavy pile and thick underfelt.
- If tables and other furniture have sharp corners, pad them. When shopping for new furniture, look for rounded corners.
- Close fireplace screens when the fire is burning. Don't leave a person with uncontrolled seizures alone in a room with a burning fire.
- Avoid using space heaters that can tip over.
- If the person with epilepsy wants to iron clothing or use a curling iron, be sure that the device has an automatic shut-off switch to prevent burns.
- Use chairs with arms to help prevent falling.

## In the bathroom

- Hang doors so they open outwards instead of inwards. Then if the person falls against the door, it can still be opened.
- Use carpeting on the floor, with extra padding.
- Keep water levels in the tub low.
- The person with epilepsy should not use any electrical appliances in the bathroom or near water.

## In the kitchen

- Cook with a microwave oven.
- When using the stove, try to use the back burners.
- Use plastic containers, plates, and drinking cups whenever possible.
- Use cups with lids (commuter cups) to prevent burns from spills.

**Teach the people close to you about what to do in case you have a seizure. Here are some of the things one can do to help someone who's having a seizure:**

- Stay calm.
- Take the person's glasses or backpack off and loosen any tight clothing near the neck.
- Don't restrain or hold the person.
- Move objects, especially sharp or hard ones, away from the person.
- Stay with the person or make sure another friend or trusted person stays with him or her.
- Talk with the person in a calm, reassuring way after the seizure is over.
- Observe the event and be able to describe what happened before, during, and after the seizure.
- Do not place an object into the person's mouth during a seizure.

Epilepsy sounds frightening, but managing it can be simple. If you have epilepsy, follow your treatment plan. Get plenty of sleep. Eat right. And exercise to reduce stress and stay in shape.