

Are you or someone known to you on treatment for Epilepsy?

- You are not alone. Many famous people including world leaders, prominent scientists, philosophers and artists have achieved great heights while having epilepsy.
- The past century has seen a huge increase in the knowledge and development of treatments for epilepsy.
- Good seizure control is achieved in the majority, with proper medications.
- A significant proportion of people with epilepsy will outgrow it.
- Epilepsy should not be a barrier to your education, to most occupations or to marriage and it should not stop you achieving your dreams in life.

What is Epilepsy?

Epilepsy is caused by abnormal electrical activity in the brain.

People with epilepsy experience episodes of seizures and may display the following:

- Jerky movements
- Unresponsiveness
- Forgetfulness
- Staring episodes
- Rapid blinking episodes
- Unexplained sudden fear or shouting
- Episodes of repetitive abnormal behaviour and unusual movements

Epilepsy is NOT the result of something anyone has done to you and is not infectious to others around you.

FIRST AID FOR SEIZURES

- **DO - Move the patient away from harm**
- **DO - Call for help**
- **DO - Stay with the patient**
- **DO - Loosen clothes around the neck**
- **DO - To avoid choking, when movements allow, turn the patient to the left lateral position**
- **DO - Keep a pillow or soft object under the head**
- **DO - Time the seizure. If it does not stop within 5 minutes, call the ambulance - 1990**

- **DO NOT - panic**
- **DO NOT - give water to drink**
- **DO NOT - insert fingers or any other hard objects to prevent mouth closure**
- **DO NOT - give iron rods to hands**
- **DO NOT - restrain their movements**

Managing Epilepsy

- Know the names of the medications you use.
- Keep a photo of the medication prescription on your phone.
- Take the medications as advised by your doctor.
- Do not miss even a single dose of anti-seizure medication. Keep an extra stock of medications and use in rotation.
- Rarely certain medications such as carbamazepine may cause reactions and skin rashes. If that happens stop the medication and urgently seek the doctor's advice.
- Whenever you seek medical attention inform the doctor that you are on treatment for epilepsy and tell them the medications that you are on.
- Keep a record of seizure dates and possible triggers.
- Try to obtain a home video of your seizures to show to your doctor.
- Some people with epilepsy may have problems with learning and mental health such as depression and anxiety. Professional help will enable you to successfully overcome these problems.

Women with Epilepsy

- When the **Oral Contraceptive Pill (OCP)** and certain anti-seizure medications are taken together, one may reduce the action of the other resulting in losing control in epilepsy and contraception. Obtain advice from your doctor.

Pregnancy

- If you are on anti-seizure medications obtain advice from your doctor regarding contraception and choosing a suitable time and plan for conception. The doctor may try to keep the medications to a minimum at the time of conception.
- It is good practice to take 5mg folic acid daily when you are on anti-seizure medications and planning pregnancy.
- In case of an unplanned pregnancy, **DO NOT STOP ANTI-SEIZURE MEDICATIONS**, assuming that drugs may harm the foetus, without doctor's advice.
- Attend your clinic appointments for close monitoring of your pregnancy.
- Avoid epilepsy triggers such as sleep deprivation.
- Breastfeeding may be continued while on anti-seizure medications - discuss with your doctor.

Driving and Epilepsy

- Since a seizure can cause abrupt loss of consciousness, driving can be a risk to yourself and others.
- Follow the doctor's advice regarding driving restrictions.

Lifestyle, Work and Epilepsy

- Alcohol and recreational drugs may exacerbate your epilepsy.
- Make sure you get regular good sleep as sleep deprivation may exacerbate epilepsy.
- Some jobs can be risky for patients with epilepsy, so when choosing a job obtain advice from your doctor.
- Avoid traveling near the open door in the train or bus. Avoid walking on the railway track or working at heights.
- Swimming may be risky.
- Keep the bathroom door unlocked when you are inside.
- Unguarded wells, ponds, fire places and kerosene lamps which can topple can be dangerous.