

## SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR CHILDREN

### Home

- *In the Bathroom:*
  - **Stay with your child at ALL times during baths, even in a shallow tub. Keep water level low. If you leave the room, ALWAYS take your child with you. Older children should take showers instead of baths.**
  - Never allow children of any age to bathe or shower if they are alone in the home.
  - Never allow children to lock the bathroom door.
  - Turn down the hot water thermostat to avoid scalding if a seizure occurs during a shower.
  - A well-fitted seat designed for use in the shower could prevent falling during a seizure.
  - Recessed soap trays can minimize injuries if a fall should happen.
  - Bathroom doors can be hung so that they open outwards, preventing the door from becoming blocked by someone falling behind it. Privacy can be maintained by using safety locks that can be operated from the outside or by putting an “engaged” sign on the door, while still allowing someone to get in if needed. Safety locks can be obtained from the Disabled Living Foundation.
  
- *General Home Maintenance:*
  - Pad sharp corners of tables and chairs. Buying round tables instead of those with sharp corners may help to reduce the risk of injury if a child falls against them.
  - Place a screen in front of fireplaces.
  - Avoid coarse fabrics, which could lead to friction burns.
  - Allow for open spaces with furniture.
  - Be careful of loose throw rugs. When choosing floor coverings and upholstery, it is worth considering the possible risk of injury if a child were to fall during a seizure. Non-slip flooring, cushioned floor coverings, or linoleum can reduce the risk of injury in the event of a fall.
  - Doors and low windows fitted with safety glass can greatly reduce any risk of injury if a child falls against them.
  - Avoid light, freestanding heaters that could easily be knocked over. Guards can be purchased that attach to radiators to increase protection from burns.
  
- *In the Bedroom:*
  - For children who have seizures during their sleep (nocturnal seizures), consider using safety pillows that can reduce the risk of suffocation.
  - A monitor in the child’s bedroom may alert you to the sound of a seizure.
  - Avoid top bunks. Lower bunks, a regular bed, futon or mattress on the floor are safer for sleep.

## **School**

- Obtain a medical alert bracelet for your child to wear at all times.
- Inform your child's school, teachers, and bus driver about seizure events, first-aid, and any limitations that may affect your child.
- Communicate with the school nurse about medication administration during school.

## **Recreation**

- Children should always wear a helmet when riding a bike.
- Children should never swim alone. Swimming in pools should always be supervised by a responsible observer/lifeguard. Wear a life-jacket when swimming in lakes and open water.
- Do not allow children to stand on the edge of a cliff or put themselves in any situation from which they could fall from a great height.
- Activities with no or little risk in which extra supervision is not needed include jogging, aerobics, cross-country skiing, dancing, hiking, golf, ping-pong, bowling, soccer, field hockey (wear a helmet), most track and field events, and baseball (wear a helmet).
- Activities with moderate risk in which supervision may be needed include climbing a tree or jungle gym (have a spotter), swimming, horseback riding (wear a helmet), bike riding (wear a helmet), canoeing (wear a life vest and helmet), ice skating or hockey (wear a helmet), tennis, gymnastics (have a spotter), roller-blading (wear a helmet), football (wear a helmet).
- High risk activities to avoid include mountain or rock climbing, bungee jumping, scuba diving, skydiving, caving, boxing, hang gliding

## **Medication**

- Administer your children's medication on time.
- If you realize that a dose of medication was missed – do not double the next dose. If there are more than two hours until the next dose is due, give the late dose as soon as you realize the dose was missed. If there are less than two hours until the next dose, skip the late dose.
- Be aware of the serious potential side effects of your child's medication.
- Keep medication locked away or out of reach of all children.
- Use a pillbox to help keep track of medication dosing and to remind you if a dose is missed.
- Stay on top of the amount of medication and refills left to avoid running out.

## **Health Tips**

- Encourage regular, well-balanced meals, good sleeping habits, and exercise.
- Try to identify seizure precipitants, such as sleep deprivation, stress, illness, etc. Avoid those precipitants if possible.
- Control fevers with Tylenol, Motrin, supervised lukewarm baths, and removal of clothing.
- Encourage children to wash their hands often to avoid illness and spreading germs.

## **For More Information:**

- The Epilepsy Foundation of Virginia (EFVA), (434)924-8669
- FE Dreifuss Comprehensive Epilepsy Program, (434)924-5401