

EPILEPSY PATIENT SAFETY GUIDELINES

Home Environment

- *Cooking:*
 - Turn pot handles inward on the stove.
 - Use the back rings or burners rather than those at the front.
 - Grill food, rather than fry.
 - If possible, use the microwave instead of the stove. Special plastic microwaveable containers might be safer than using other dishes. Mugs of water for hot drinks can also be heated in the microwave instead of using a kettle.
 - Cook when another person is in the home.
 - If possible, using a cooker on which the heat can be turned off quickly (e.g., gas) can reduce the risk of injury.

- *Activities of Daily Living:*
 - **NO TUB BATHS- ONLY SHOWERS!** Make sure someone is with you or near when you shower.
 - A well-fitted seat designed for use in the shower could prevent you from falling during a seizure.
 - Do not lock your bathroom door.
 - 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. Availability of 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 person falls against them.
 - Place a screen in front of fireplaces. Don’t build a fire alone.
 - 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 may be worth considering the possible risk of injury if a person 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.
 - Fireproof fabrics and furniture may be particularly important if you smoke.
 - Doors and low windows fitted with safety glass can greatly reduce any risk of injury if someone 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:*
 - People who have seizures during their sleep (nocturnal seizures) may consider using safety pillows that can reduce the risk of suffocation.
 - Low-level beds or futons, or even placing the mattress on the floor, can be useful if there is a risk of someone falling out of bed.

- *Reducing risk of scalds and burns*
 - Minimize the distance that hot food is carried.
 - Use cordless kettles with a safety lid and a cordless iron.

Driving

- Virginia law mandates no driving until seizure-free for six months after the last seizure.

Work

- Wear a medical alert bracelet or necklace at all times.
- Wear a helmet when appropriate.
- Make sure co-workers are aware of what to do should an event occur.
- Avoid long hours and irregular shifts.
- Be sure to take your medication on time.
- Avoid jobs requiring working at heights, with sharp objects, or that require driving.

School

- Wear a medical alert bracelet at all times.
- Inform school and teachers about your events, seizure first-aid, and any limitations.
- Take your medications on time.
- If possible, play with a buddy.

Recreation

- Avoid drinking alcohol.
- Do not swim alone or in open water. Use a personal flotation device (life jacket). A lifeguard or swimming partner is useful only if they can rescue you from under the water and provide first aid.
- Do not bike ride alone; always wear a helmet.
- Do not climb ladders or anything high.

Medication

- Take your medication on time.
- If you realize that you didn't take a dose of medication on time – do not double the next dose. If it is greater than two hours until your next dose then take the late dose. If less than two hours until your next dose, then skip the late dose.
- Beware of drinking alcohol because its effects will be enhanced by your anti-seizure medication.
- Be aware of the major side effects of your medication.
- Keep medication locked away or out of reach, particularly if children are around.
- Use a pillbox to help keep track of your medication dosing and to remind you if you forget to take a dose.

Health Tips

- Eat regular, well-balanced meals.
- Avoid identifiable seizure precipitants, such as, sleep deprivation, stress, illness, etc.
- Develop good sleep habits.
- Exercise on a regular basis.

Women

- If you are of childbearing age, be sure to discuss your seizures, medication side effects, and pregnancy risks with your physician.

For More Information:

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

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