

RESOURCES AVAILABLE

Epilepsy Foundation Northwest

2311 N. 45th St. #134
Seattle, WA 98103-6905
1-800-752-3509

www.epilepsyfoundation.org/local/northwest

Epilepsy Foundation of America

8301 Professional Place
Landover, MD 20785; 1-800-332-1000
www.epilepsyfoundation.org

**Parent Training and
Information (PTI) Offices are
located throughout the State.
Call our main office toll-free at
1-800-572-7368 (v/tty)
for the office closest to you.**



Parent Training and Information Program

Tips for Parents of Children with Epilepsy

*Children and youth with disabilities have the
right to a free appropriate public education.
IDEA 2004*

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Statewide Parent Training and Information Center

6316 So. 12th St.
Tacoma, WA 98465
(253) 565-2266 (v/tty)
1-800-5-PARENT (v/tty)
Fax: (253) 566-8052
E-mail: pave@wapave.org
Website: www.wapave.org

Third Decade of Service

What is epilepsy?

Epileptic seizures occur because of a sudden and abnormal discharge of electricity in the brain. The number of cells involved and the duration of the seizure determine the type of epilepsy. The type most people are aware of is grand mal epilepsy. When this type of seizure occurs, a child will fall to the ground, lose consciousness and develop contractions and jerking of the muscles. Another form of epilepsy, less well known, is petit mal. This form of epilepsy is much more difficult to diagnose. With petit mal seizures, the individual experiences a 10-30 second loss of consciousness closely resembling a stare. There are many different degrees of seizures and almost as many types. Epilepsy is most likely to occur after a head injury. One in every 50 children has epilepsy.

Learning and epilepsy

The vast majority of children with epilepsy have seizures under control with one or more anti-convulsive medications. They attend regular classes and have normal intelligence. Some children have more difficulty with seizure control and must take large doses of seizure medication that can affect their school accomplishments. Special education classes are sometimes recommended when the epilepsy contributes to learning difficulties.

Activities and epilepsy

Generally, epilepsy has no direct effect on health. The child with epilepsy needs the same well

balanced diet as a child without epilepsy. With regard to sports activities, the American Medical Association would rather see a child with epilepsy play tennis and run track than on the football field or hockey rink. As far as water activities are concerned, certain precautions must be taken. Young children should be carefully and constantly supervised while in the tub and water levels should be kept low. Older children should take showers. Bathroom doors should never be locked and there should be someone in the house during bath time. Precautions must be taken during swimming. A person with epilepsy should never swim without a "buddy", a good swimmer who is aware of the epilepsy and willing to keep an eye on the person. Lifeguards or swimming instructors should always be told if a person has epilepsy. Head protection for skateboards, roller skates, bicycles and flotation gear for boating, fishing and water skiing are important for all children, not just the child with epilepsy.

Medication

Today, doctors treat epilepsy with drugs called anti-convulsions. Epilepsy can usually be controlled to varying degrees, but at present cannot be cured. In some children, medications work so well that seizures become completely controlled; however, if the drugs are stopped or given irregularly, the brain cells return to their "jittery" state and seizures may resume. Throughout a child's life the medication history, drugs may need to be adjusted to accommodate physical changes. Side effects of anti-convulsions need to be discussed in detail with your physician. It is important to remember that

alcohol negates the effects of anti-convulsions and many over-the-counter remedies contain alcohol.

Should children with epilepsy have any special education?

Most children with epilepsy are not educationally disabled and, therefore, need no special programming. However children with epilepsy may qualify for a Section 504. This law provides accommodations/modifications for children with a disability. Accommodations may include, training of staff, a buddy system, alternative recess, special arrangement of desk / furniture and classroom, rest time, different lighting, make up for excessive absences, etc.

Does epilepsy get worse with age?

Not generally unless an underlying brain problem that is causing seizures get worse with time, such as tumors or tuberous sclerosis.

Can a person with epilepsy get a driver's license?

Yes, if seizures are under reliable control and the person is under a physician's care. Check with the Epilepsy Association of Western Washington for further information.

"Your child may be eligible for SSI payments. Contact your local Social Security Office for more information."