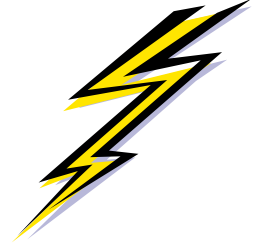


EPILEPSY



DEFINITION:

Epilepsy is a group of symptoms caused from abnormal electrical activity in the brain which results in seizures of varying magnitude.

TYPES OF SEIZURES:

- **Grand Mal:** Seizures that always produce a loss of consciousness. This type of seizure often starts with an aura (warning signal), such as ringing in the ears, tingling sensation or a distinct smell. The actual seizure starts with the tonic phase (continuous, stiff or rigid), followed by the clonic phase (spasmodic jerking and loss of consciousness). During the convulsive phase, the person may lose bladder or bowel control. Afterwards, the person may be very tired or want to sleep.
- **Petit Mal:** Seizures where the person appears to stare into space and have a lapse of attention. The eyelids may flutter rapidly.
- **Focal:** Seizures are similar to grand mal seizures where there is a loss of body tone and the person may collapse; however, the person usually does not lose consciousness. In Jacksonian focal seizures, there is localized twitching of muscles in the extremities which move up the arm or leg.

CONDITIONS THAT COULD TRIGGER SEIZURES:

- Hyperventilation
- Growth spurts
- Alcohol consumption
- High alkalinity of the blood
- Low blood sugar
- Constipation
- Heightened emotional state of stress
- Excessive noise or bright flashing light
- Improperly used medications
- Lack of sleep or fatigue
- Intense concentration
- Menstruation
- Hyperthermia (too much body heat)
- Hyperhydration (excess water ingestion)

WHAT TO DO IF A SEIZURE OCCURS:

- Remain calm; a seizure cannot be stopped
- Move all obstacles away from the person

- Help the person to the floor to avoid self injury
- After the seizure, allow the person to rest
- Do not restrain the person
- Gently loosen any restraining clothing
- Observe the person throughout the seizure and report the incident in detail
- Tilt the head back to open an airway if the person is having trouble breathing
- Call for medical help if the seizure lasts for more than 5 minutes, if one seizure immediately follows another, or if it is the first known seizure
- Never force anything into the person's mouth or between clenched teeth
- Turn the persons head to the side, so that secretions can drain from the mouth

COMMONLY USED MEDICATIONS*:

- Valium
- Dilantin
- Depakene
- Diazepam
- Tegretol
- Luminal
- Phenobarbital

* Seizure medications have a number of adverse side effects. Among these are reduced coordination and concentration, poor reaction time, drowsiness, blurred vision and irritability.

ACTIVITIES WHICH REQUIRE A PHYSICIAN'S PERMISSION:

- Archery
- Rope climbing
- Wrestling
- Bicycling
- Horseback riding
- Underwater swimming
- Parallel bars
- Lacrosse
- Tackle football
- High bar
- Diving
- Balance beam
- Activities that involve repeated blows to the head (e.g., heading a soccer ball)

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES:

- Long distance running
- Group activities

- Eye-limb coordination
- Swimming
- Dance
- Individual activities
- All fundamental motor skills

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS:

- All activities should be monitored and individually adjusted for each person's exercise tolerance and medical history.
- Before actual programming, check the district's medical history sheet and contact the student's physician.

RECOMMENDED WEB SITES:

[Epilepsy in Young Children](#)

[Epilepsy Foundation of Victoria Home Page](#)

Developed by Texas Woman's University Graduate Adapted Physical Education Program in cooperation with Denton ISD (French, 1997).

Information on this sheet contains only suggested guidelines. Each student must be considered individually, and in many cases, a physician's written consent should be obtained.