

**EPILEPSY  
ACTION**

# Information about epilepsy

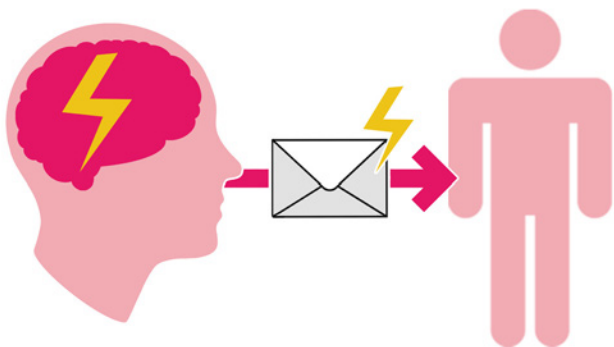
**easy read**



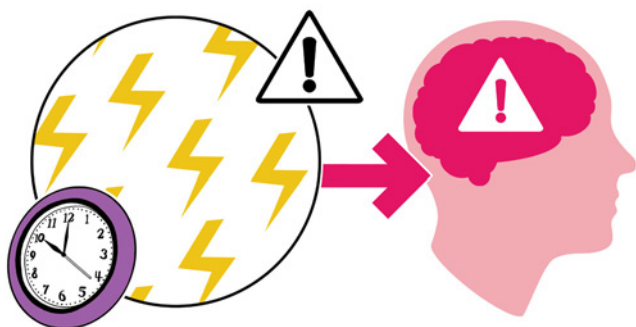
# What is epilepsy?



Epilepsy is having **seizures** because of something happening in your brain. Some people call seizures fits.



Electrical activity is happening in our brain all the time. This lets the brain send messages to our body.

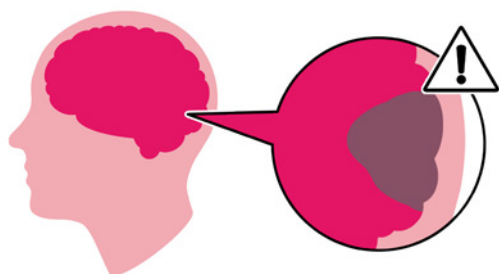


A **seizure** is when your brain stops working properly. This happens when there is a lot of electrical activity all at the same time.

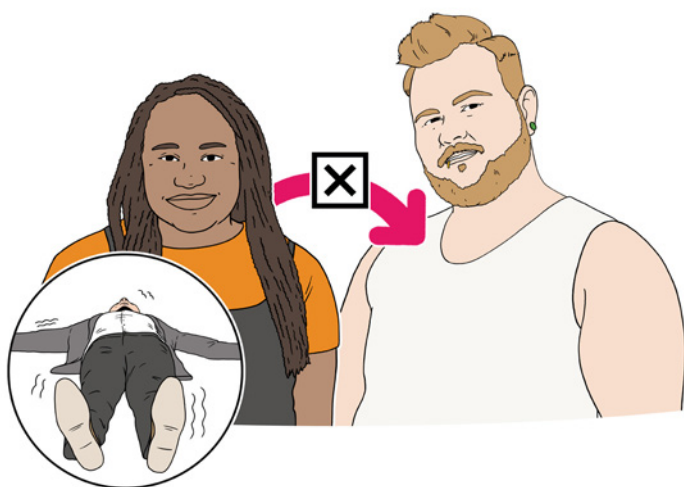
# Why do I have epilepsy?



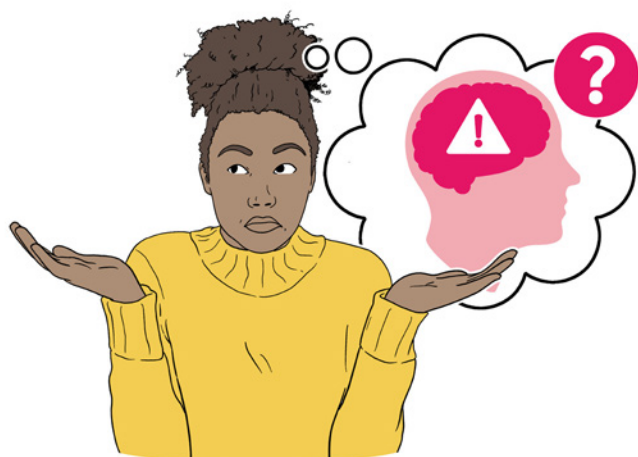
There are lots of reasons people have epilepsy, some people are born with it and others may develop it as they get older.



Some people have epilepsy because they have hurt their head badly and caused damage to their brain.

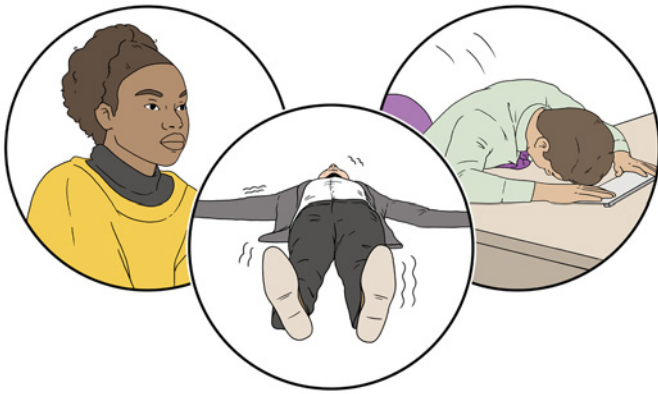


You can not catch epilepsy from someone else.



Sometimes we do not know why someone has epilepsy.

# Does everyone with epilepsy have the same sort of seizures?

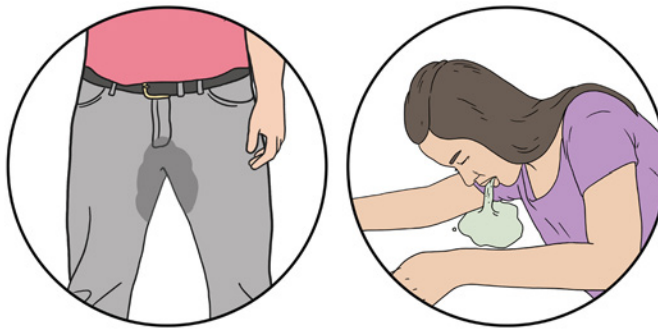


There are lots of different sorts of seizures. Not everyone will have the same sort of seizures.

## Tonic-clonic seizures



This is where you go stiff, you fall down, and then you shake. Also you will not know what is happening.



You might wet yourself or be sick.



You might hurt yourself falling or bite your tongue.



After a tonic clonic seizure:

- You might need a big rest

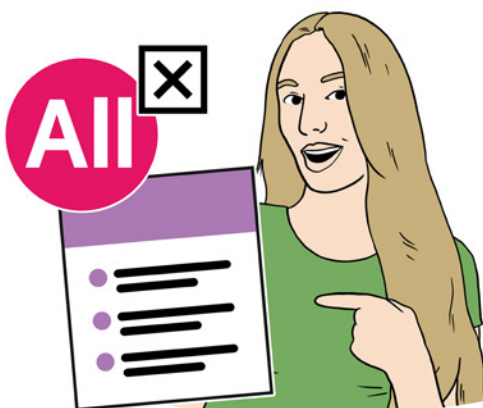


- You might have a headache and pains in your body. These should go away after a good rest



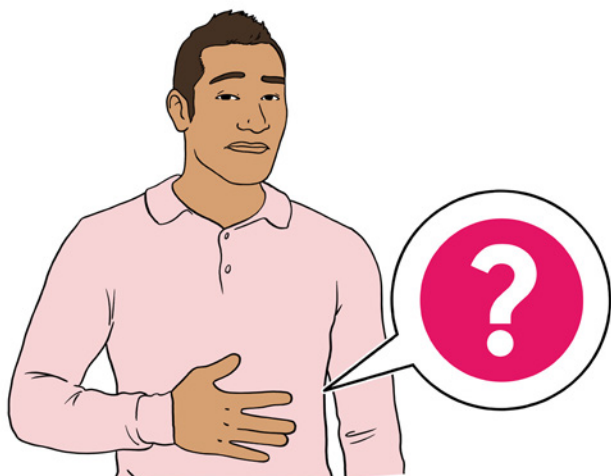
- You may not remember anything about the seizure

## Focal seizure



Here are some things people can feel or do when they have a focal seizure. Everyone's seizures are different, so you will not feel or do all of the things in this list.





A person having a focal seizure may:

- Have a funny feeling in their tummy



- Suddenly feel very scared



- Fiddling with things like their buttons or their clothes



- Making the same movement lots of times

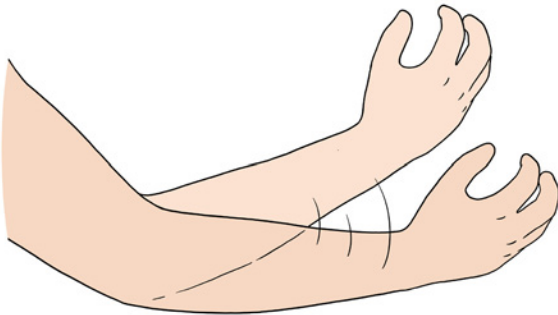


- Hearing what someone is saying but not being able to understand it.



Some people feel confused or tired after a focal seizure. You might know what happened, but some people do not

### Myoclonic seizure



These are seizures when a muscle **jerks**, this means moving suddenly out of your control.



For example your arm or leg might suddenly go up in the air. This can be annoying if you are carrying a hot drink.

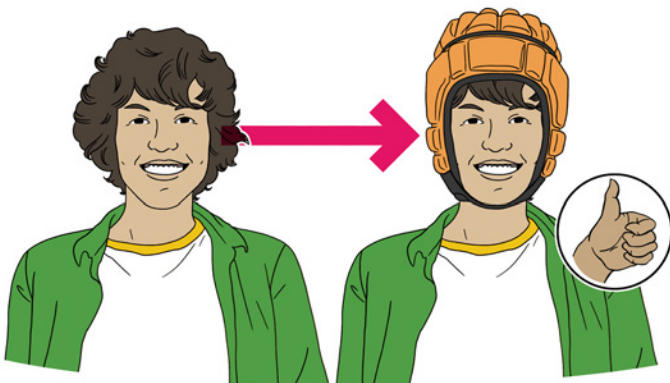


You should feel ok afterwards.

## Drop attacks or atonic seizures



These are seizures where you fall to the ground very quickly. If you have drop attacks you often hurt your head.



You might wear a helmet to keep your head safe.



Unless you have hurt yourself, you should feel ok quite soon after a drop attack.



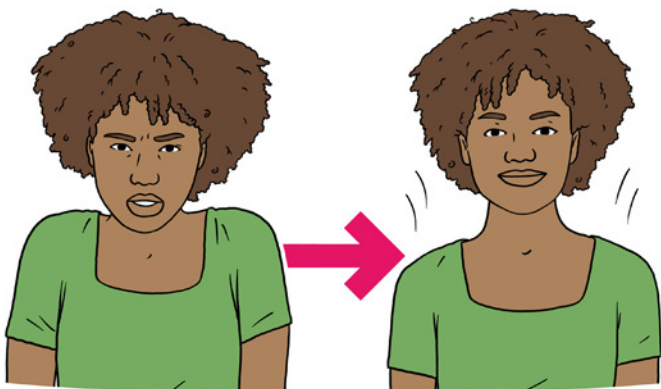
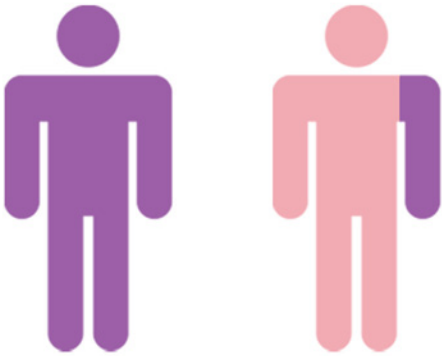
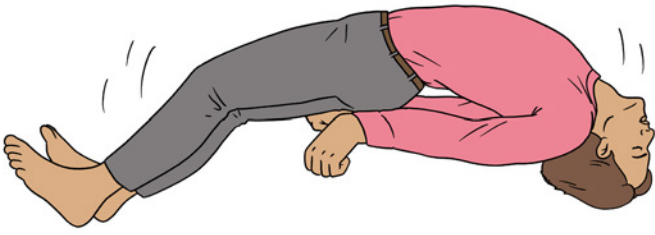
## Tonic seizures

These are seizures where your muscles go stiff.

For some people, all of their muscles go stiff. For other people, only some muscles go stiff.

You might fall over, lift your arms up or make a noise. You might stop breathing.

After a tonic seizure your muscles will relax. You will start breathing again.





You might feel very tired or confused.

## Absence seizures



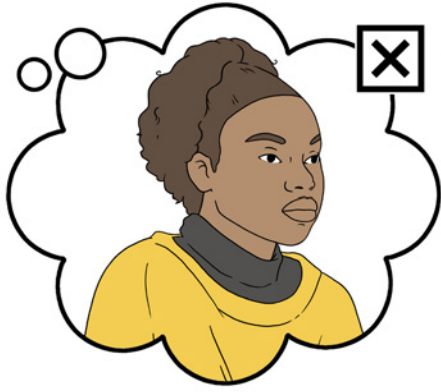
Absence seizure means you just stop and stare for a short time.



When you are having an absence seizure you do not know what is going on.

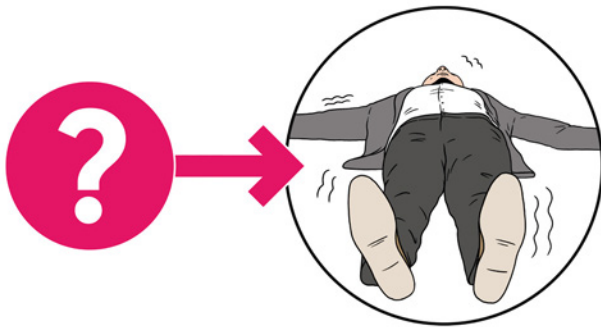


When it has finished you usually feel ok.



You might not know you had a seizure.

# What can cause a seizure?



Something that causes a seizure is called a trigger. Not everyone with epilepsy has the same triggers. Here are some things that trigger seizures for some people:

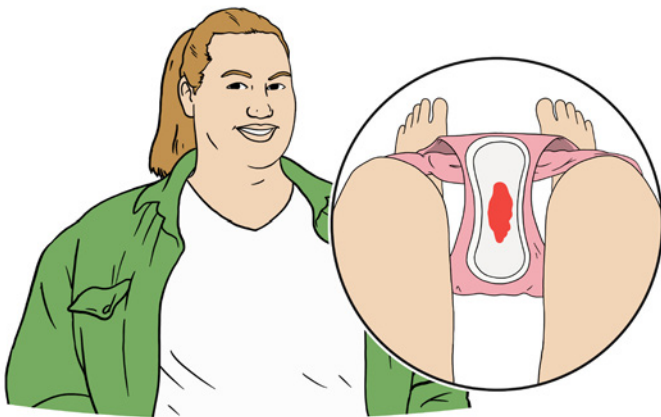
- Not taking your epilepsy medicine
- Not sleeping enough
- Getting very worried



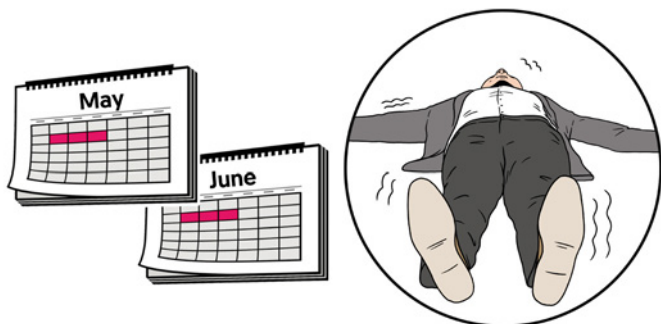
- Being poorly



- Drinking too much alcohol



- If you have **periods**, they can affect your seizures  
**Periods** are when you bleed from your vagina each month



You might have seizures at the same time every month, but this might not be the same time as you are having your period.



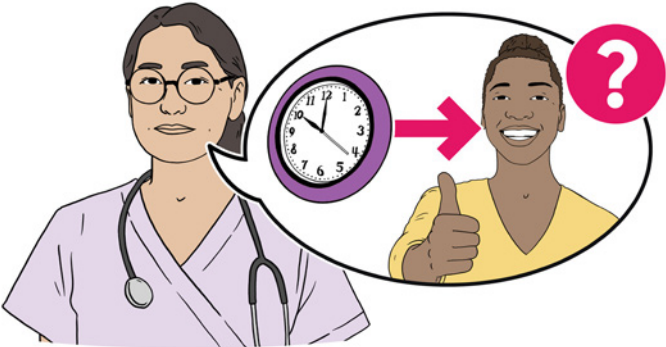
# What questions will the doctor ask about my seizures?



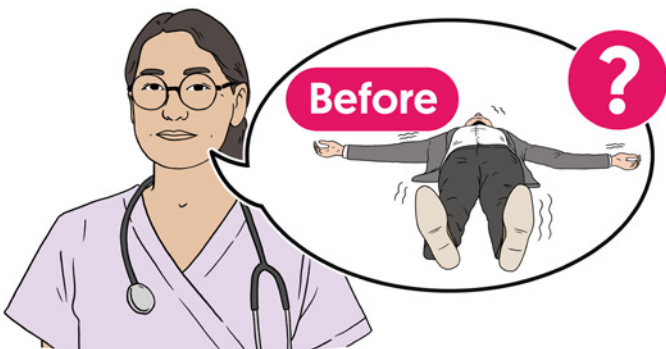
What were you doing before the seizure, did your body or head feel different?



Did anyone see your seizure?  
What did the seizure look like?



How long did it take to feel better?



What were you doing before the seizure?

## Will I need to have any tests?



There are some tests that can help us find out more about your epilepsy.



Your doctor might want to take some of your blood for a blood test.



Or they might want to use a machine that can look at your brain. This is called a **brain scan**.



There are different types of brain scan. One uses wires on your head. This is called an **EEG**. One is done in a big tube. This is called an **MRI**.



A doctor or nurse will explain these tests to you if you need to have them.



If you have any questions, ask your doctor or nurse.

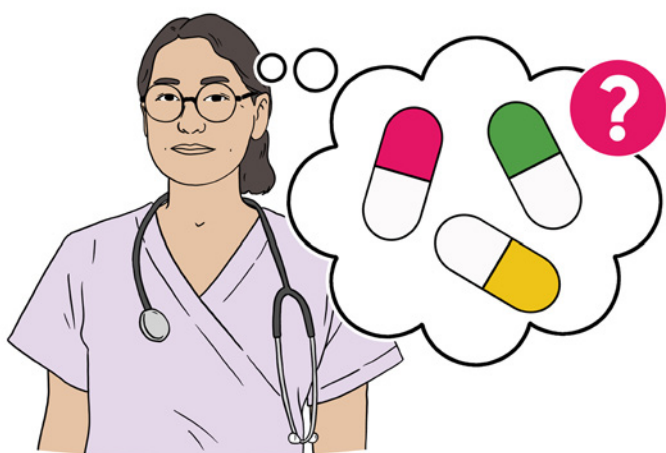


None of the tests can say you definitely have epilepsy. But they can help the doctor understand your seizures.

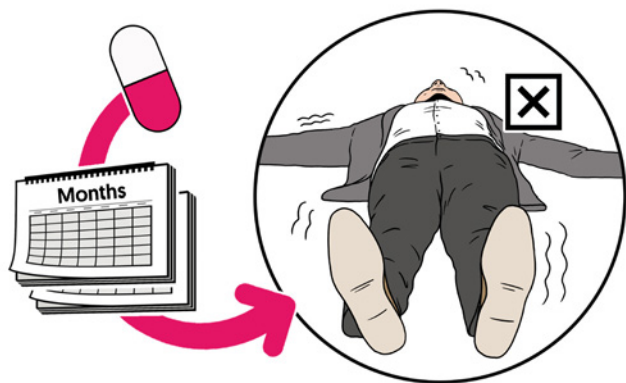
## Is there a medicine that can work for me?



Most people who have seizures need to take medicine to help the seizures stop.



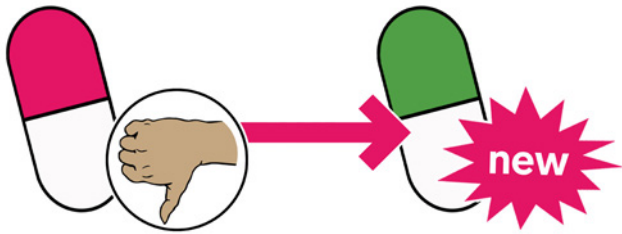
The doctor will try and find an epilepsy medicine that is right for you.



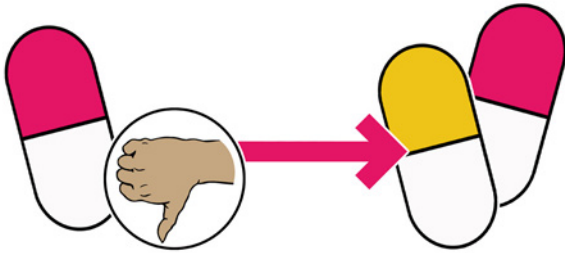
Sometimes the medicine will stop all the seizures. Medicine can take a few months to work.



For a few people, medicine does not help them have less seizures.



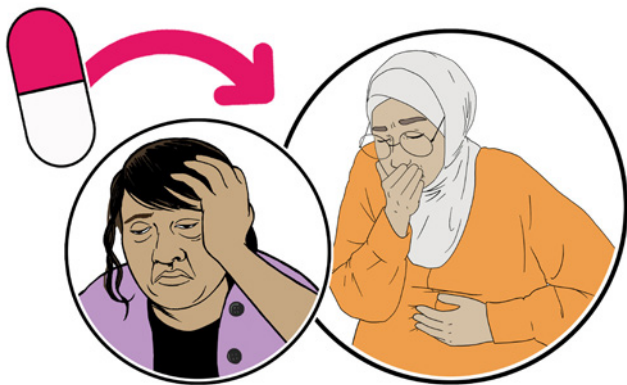
You might need to try a different medicine if the first one does not help.



If one medicine does not seem to work, they might give you two at the same time.



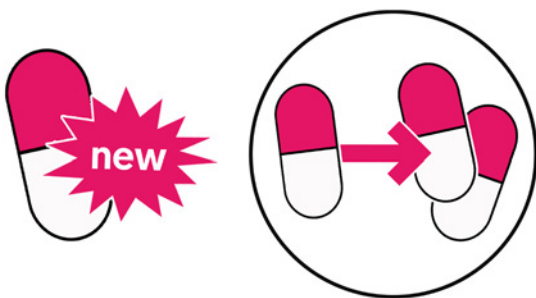
# Will my epilepsy medicine make me feel poorly?



Some people can feel poorly for a while because of their epilepsy medicine. This is called a **side effect**.



Not everyone has side effects, but some people do.



You may get side effects when you start taking epilepsy medicine or when you start taking a bigger amount of your medicine.



Your doctor can tell you what side effects you might get.

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Here are some side effects. Not everyone will get side effects. Most people who do get side effects only have 1 or 2 of these things.



Some side effects are:

- Feeling like you might be sick



- Feeling tired



- Feeling grumpy or sad



- Feeling dizzy



- Not being able to sleep



Usually this goes away, but sometimes side effects can stay.



Make sure you tell someone if you are feeling poorly. The doctor or nurse may be able to do something about this.

# Is there anything else to stop my seizures?



Your doctor might try some other things if your medicine is not working.



Some people eat a special diet.



Some people can have brain surgery. This is an operation on your brain.



Not everyone can have brain surgery. Your doctor will tell you if they think you should have it.



## What can I do to help?



Write down in a diary when you have a seizure and what epilepsy medicine you are taking.



Get help to do this if you need to.



Show your diary to your doctor or nurse and talk about how you are feeling.



This will help you find out if there are things that make your seizures more likely.





Here are some things you can do that might help you have less seizures:



- Take your medicines on time



- Get lots of sleep



- Avoid worry



- Eat healthy food



- Exercise

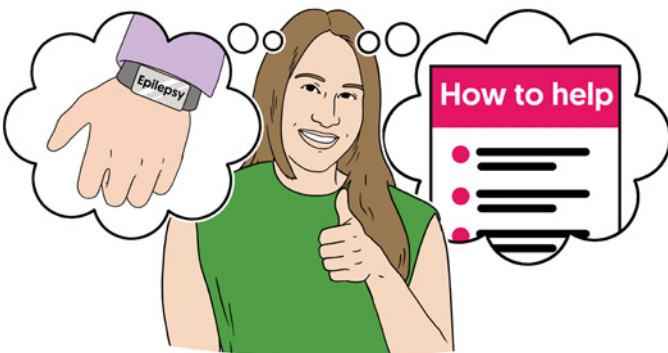
# Is there anything I should do because I have epilepsy?



Tell the people you are with that you have epilepsy. They can help decide what is safe for you.



Carry a card or wear a bracelet that says you have epilepsy. You can show this to people to help you explain epilepsy.



It will also help people to help you if you have a seizure.

# Keeping yourself safe if you are still having seizures



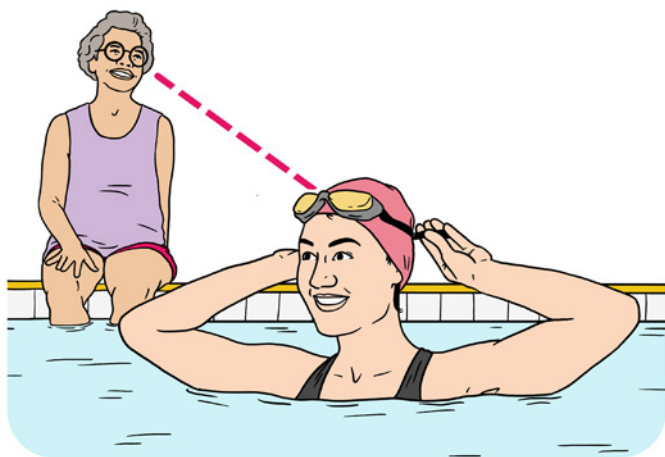
Here are some ways to keep yourself safe if you are still having seizures.

## Washing



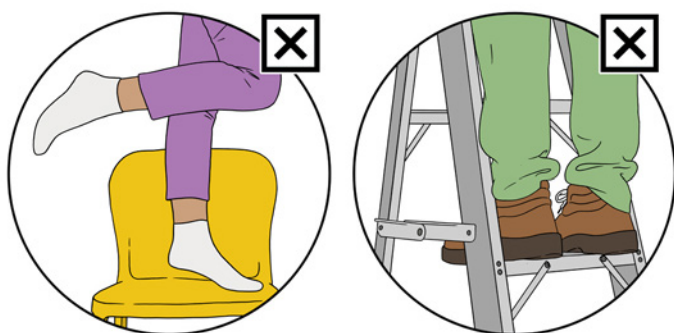
Only have a bath or shower when there is someone close by.

## Swimming



Only go swimming when there is someone near you who could help if you had a seizure.

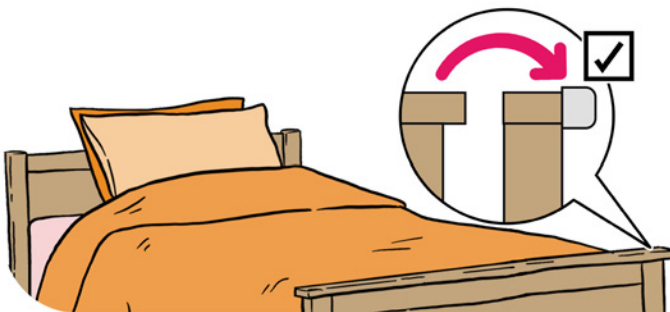
## Other activities



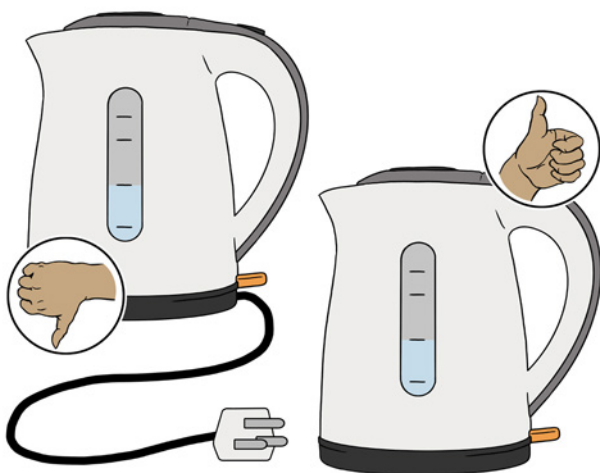
Stay on the ground if you can. It is best not to climb up high like on a chair, climbing frame or a ladder.



Only use things that might be dangerous, like a knife or an iron, when someone is nearby.



Cover any furniture edges or corners that are sharp or stick out.



If you can, use wireless things such as irons or kettles. This is so there is less chance of them getting pulled over if you have a seizure.



# Will people treat me differently because I have epilepsy?



It is good if people with you know about your seizures. They should know how to help you if you have a seizure.



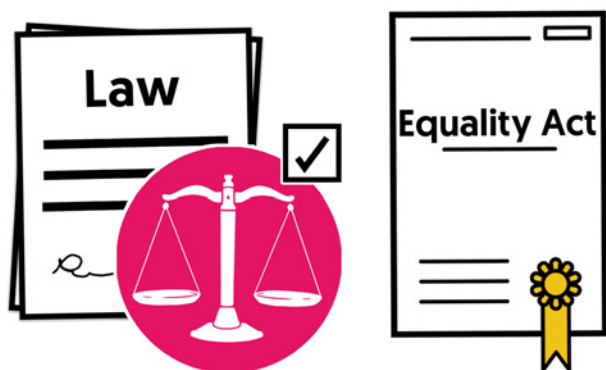
But they should not treat you differently just because you have epilepsy.



An example of this might be if someone said you could not join a club because you have epilepsy.



If you think someone is treating you differently because you have epilepsy, and you think it is unfair, talk to someone you trust.



There are laws that say that everyone should be treated fairly, like **The Equality Act**.

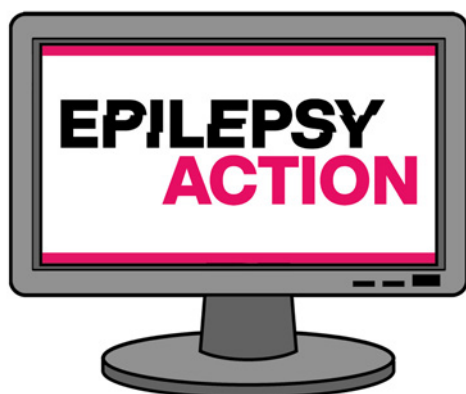
## Help from family and friends and carers



We have information on our website about how people can help you.



This includes what to do if you have a seizure.



Visit the website here:  
[epilepsy.org.uk/living/for-carers](https://epilepsy.org.uk/living/for-carers)

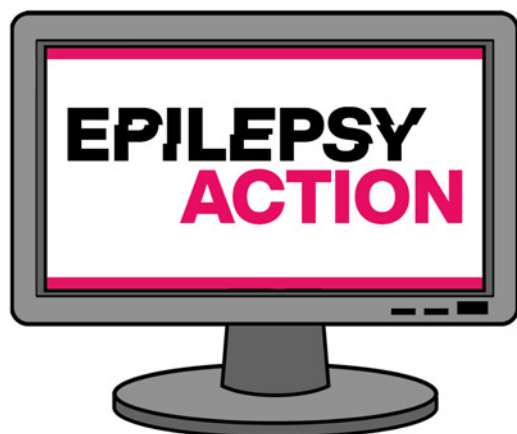
# Find out more about epilepsy



To find out more you can call the Epilepsy Action helpline for free.



Call: **0808 800 5050**



Or visit our website:  
**[www.epilepsy.org.uk](http://www.epilepsy.org.uk)**

# EPILEPSY ACTION

To make suggestions or give feedback on this booklet,  
please email: [feedback@epilepsy.org.uk](mailto:feedback@epilepsy.org.uk)



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Phone 0113 210 8800 [epilepsy@epilepsy.org.uk](mailto:epilepsy@epilepsy.org.uk) [epilepsy.org.uk](http://epilepsy.org.uk)

**Epilepsy Action Helpline freephone 0808 800 5050**

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