

# 7 Epilepsy: Balancing Risk and Safety

Accidents happen with or without epilepsy.

However, there are additional risks for people with epilepsy.

An assessment of risk and safety is best made from a position of information and knowledge.

## High Risk Factors

**Seizures** - severe  
intractable (continue in spite of medication)  
unpredictable  
no warning  
frequent falls  
clusters of seizures.

**Additional neurological disorders—dementia, head injury, learning disability**

**Side effects of high dose of antiepileptic drugs**

double vision  
tiredness  
sleepiness  
dizziness  
poor memory.

**Additional physical disabilities**

poor eye sight  
joint and muscle inflexibility  
heart and circulation problems.

**Anxiety, depression**

**Smoking and alcohol related accidents**

**Danger areas—home, school, workplace, leisure, travel.**

## How can a balanced view be achieved?

- Know your seizure pattern (see Leaflet 3 'Recording Seizures').
- Know why, when, where and how you may face risk.
- Decide the degree of supervision you need.
- Adapt your environment wherever necessary.
- Adapt equipment where necessary.



## Minimising Risk Factors

Accurate epilepsy diagnosis

Appropriate treatment by an epilepsy specialist

Regular review of treatment plans

Good understanding of epilepsy

Support of family/friends/GP

Ensuring best possible health (See leaflet 5 'Treatment for Epilepsy')

Carry ID card or wear ID bracelet

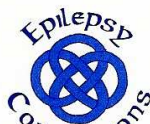
Support dogs—consider where appropriate.

## 10 Basic Safety Points

- Ensure floor coverings are fixed, e.g. non-slip rugs.
- Provide adequate lighting on stairs and landings.
- Choose sturdy furniture—avoid sharp corners and clutter.
- Provide sufficient power points - avoid trailing flexes—use equipment fitted with safety cut-outs.
- Use toughened safety glass in windows and doors.
- Firmly fix fireguards and radiator covers—lag any hot exposed pipes.
- Keep medication clearly labelled and securely stored.
- Install and regularly test smoke and other safety alarms.
- Keep an up-to-date emergency contact list near the phone with a note describing your seizures and treatment.
- Keep a well-maintained First Aid Box to hand.

(See also leaflets 'Safety in the Home', 'Safety in School, College and University', 'Safety at Work', 'Safety in Sport', 'Epilepsy: Leisure and Pleasure—Safety Issues'.

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Supporting people with epilepsy

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