

# Epilepsy—Safety—Leisure and pleasure

## Activities

### Cinema and Theatre

Going to the cinema and the theatre is safe for most people with epilepsy. Films and stage productions with special effects (including laser, strobe effect and flashing lights) may trigger seizures in people with photosensitive epilepsy. However, 3D film is safe for all people with epilepsy. Seats in lower levels are safest.

### Pubbing, Clubbing and Gigs

Be aware of seizure triggers, e.g. dehydration, excess noise and heat, late nights.

Flashing lights as mentioned above can be uncomfortable and may trigger seizures in people with photosensitive epilepsy. If affected, turn away and cover one eye with your hand until the lights stop flashing.

### Theme Parks, Fairgrounds, Carnival Rides

Be aware that fast moving, jerking or spinning rides may disorient you and trigger seizures.

## Alcohol, Stimulants and Recreational Drugs

### Alcohol

Alcohol can make seizures more likely. Some people with epilepsy can enjoy alcohol in small amounts, i.e. up to 1-2 units per day.

**1 unit of alcohol =**

1/2 pint of ordinary strength beer, lager or cider

**or**

1 small glass (125ml) of wine

**or**

1 single pub measure of spirits (1/6th of a gill or 25ml)

### Stimulants

There is no evidence that drinking reasonable amounts of tea or coffee can trigger seizures. Some people report fewer seizures when they reduce their caffeine consumption. Energy drinks and some fizzy drinks contain high levels of caffeine.

**Drinking too much of any fluid can upset the body's fluid balance and may trigger seizures.**

## **Tobacco**

There is no evidence to link smoking with seizures. If you want to stop smoking, seek advice from your GP in the first instance as some nicotine preparations are not suitable for people with epilepsy.

## **Solvents (glue, paint, aerosols, petrol)**

Misuse of solvents can cause brain damage which can lead to epilepsy. Continuous use can make seizures worse.

## **Recreational Drugs**

Seizures are caused by an imbalance in the chemical activity of the brain. AEDs work to restore that balance. Recreational drugs also affect the brain's chemical balance. Mixing AEDs with unregulated substances can have unpredictable effects which can be potentially very dangerous.

For more information about alcohol, recreational drugs and solvents see [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com) or phone 0300 123 6600.

## **Electronic Media**

### **Televisions, Computers, Laptops, Tablets, Computer games, Mobile Phones/Smart Phones**

Using modern electronic media doesn't normally affect people with epilepsy.

Follow standard guidelines by:

- taking 5 minute breaks away from the screen every 15 minutes (use a timer as it's easy to lose track of time)
- not using when tired
- using an anti-glare screen if you are using older equipment (Cathode Ray Tube [CRT] screens)
- switching off immediately if you feel uncomfortable, e.g. dizzy, blurred vision, twitching muscles.

Liquid crystal screens and plasma screens don't flicker and shouldn't present any problems, but because they are brighter and have more contrasting colours, the risk is not totally removed.

About 5% of people with epilepsy have photosensitive epilepsy, where seizures can be triggered by flickering lights or patterns. Additional precautions are:

- read and follow instructions as some DVDs, games and software have photosensitivity warnings – check before viewing
- ensure correct adjustment of chair and computer screen.

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