

COPING WITH EPILEPSY

This factsheet aims to help all University employees to understand the nature of epilepsy and to counter some of the myths. It contains advice on what to do if problems arise and the implications of epilepsy in the workplace.

EPILEPSY

What is it?

Epilepsy is a condition that results from disturbance in the normal electrical activity of the brain resulting in seizures.

Epileptic seizures (fits) may vary from momentary inattention, without loss of consciousness (minor epilepsy or 'petit mal'), to muscular spasm and convulsions (a major epilepsy or 'grand mal').

In many cases there is no known cause why epilepsy should occur. It can result, however, following head injury, brain surgery, strokes, serious infections and from the use of certain drugs.

In many cases the individual experiences some early warning signs. Some individuals have attacks only at night. Very rarely individuals have an attack as a result of a visual stimulus for example television screens or visual display units (this is known as photo sensitive epilepsy).

Usually the attacks occur as a single event but some unfortunate individuals go on to recurrent convulsions or prolonged unconsciousness. Occasionally a major fit will follow a minor one.

What to do if someone experiences a seizure

- The aim is to **protect the casualty from injury** during the seizure and provide care once he / she has regained consciousness.
- If the casualty is falling, try to support him/her to ease the fall. Lay them down gently in a safe place if possible.
- Clear a space around the casualty and ask all by-standers to leave unless of course you need additional help. If possible, carefully loosen clothing around their neck and place something soft under their head
- When the convulsions stop place the casualty in the 'recovery position' on their side to help breathing
- When the attack is over, stay with the casualty until you are certain that recovery is complete
- Even if the casualty makes a full recovery advise him/her to inform the doctor about the latest attack.

The DON'TS

DO NOT move or lift the casualty unless he/she is in danger.

DO NOT forcibly restrain them.

DO NOT put anything in their mouth or try to open it.

DO NOT try to wake the casualty.

DO NOT give the casualty anything to drink unless you are sure of full alertness.

DO NOT send for an ambulance unless: the casualty has several seizures, has been injured during the seizure, or takes longer than fifteen minutes to regain consciousness. If the casualty has an epilepsy card it may tell you how long the seizure normally lasts and/or provide additional information.

Please Note

Minor seizures will probably go unnoticed and will require no special measures.

What are the implications for employment?

Because of the nature of the condition, people suffering from epilepsy should not work at heights or with moving machinery. If possible it is advisable that they do not work in isolation. It is also better if close colleagues are aware of the condition and the action to be taken in case of a seizure.

Where to get help and further information

Epilepsy Action:

New Anstey House

Gate Way Drive

Yeadon

Leeds LS19 7XY

www.epilepsy.org.uk/

Freephone Helpline Tel: 0808 800 5050

9.30am - 4.30pm Monday-Thursday 9.30am - 4pm Friday

helpline@epilepsy.org.uk

Occupational Health Services

www.manchester.ac.uk/occupational-health

South Campus

Waterloo Place

182-184 Oxford Road

Manchester M13 9GP

Tel: 0161-275-2858

waterloocchealth@manchester.ac.uk

North Campus

B22, The Mill

Sackville Street

Manchester M13 9PL

Tel: 0161-306-5806

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