



Helping People with Seizure Disorders
1



Fun in the Sun: Dehydration and Water Safety
2



Resources
2



DDS SafetyNet

PROMOTING CHOICE AND OPTIONS IN THE COMMUNITY FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

Helping People with Seizure Disorders

What are seizures?

A seizure is a rush of electrical activity in a person's brain. Seizures cause a person's behavior or emotions to change suddenly, and can last anywhere from several seconds to several minutes.

Many of the people you support have seizures. It is important to know how seizures may affect their lives and what you can do to help someone you support who is having a seizure.

Are everyone's seizures the same?

No! People have very different types of seizures. Some people shake when they have a seizure because their muscles are suddenly tightening up. This kind of shaking is called having "spasms." Other people may simply become confused for a few minutes, while their muscles remain relatively calm. Because people's seizures can be different, the way you care for a person having a seizure can change from person to person.

Be in-the-know!

Support staff should be familiar with how a person usually acts before, during and after a seizure. One good way to keep track of this information is to create an up-to-date record of all the seizures a person has. For example, make a logbook for every person you support who has seizures. Each time they have a seizure, write detailed information about it in the logbook. For example:

- How long did the seizure last?
- Did the person throw-up?
- How did the person breathe before, during and after the seizure?

For more ideas on how to keep records of seizures, check out the link in the "Resources" box on page 2.

People who have seizures may wear a special medical alert bracelet or necklace to let others know that they have a seizure disorder. Ask a doctor about ordering these necklaces or bracelets for the people you support who have seizures.

Avoiding seizure "triggers"	Supporting someone during a seizure	Supporting someone after a seizure
<p>Seizure triggers are things that can make someone more likely to have a seizure. Help the people you support to prevent seizure triggers by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Making sure they take their medicine regularly. ✓ Avoiding things that cause them stress. ✓ Helping them exercise. ✓ Ensuring they get all the rest and sleep they need. 	<p>When someone is having a seizure, there is nothing you can do to make it stop. But there are things that you can do to help. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Remain calm. ✓ Move nearby objects that could hurt the person. ✓ If the person is on the floor, help them breathe by having them lie on their side. ✓ Carefully place clothing/pillows under the person's head. 	<p>How you treat someone after a seizure depends on who that person is. If the person has small seizures, you may only have to help him or her get home to rest. But if the person's seizure leads to injury, loss of breath, aggressive behavior or continued seizures, you may need to call 911.</p> <p>Check out the DDS Safety Net website. Just click on Tools and look for "Dos & Don'ts" for helping someone during and after a seizure.</p>



Fun in the Sun: Dehydration and Water Safety

Prevent dehydration in the people you support!

Now that it's growing warmer outside, it is very important that everyone gets enough to drink. Otherwise, a person can become dehydrated. **Dehydration** happens when there is not enough liquid, especially water, in your body. It is easy to become dehydrated during the spring and summer because you can lose a lot of liquid when you sweat.

Look for these signs to see if someone you support is dehydrated:

- They are very thirsty or lightheaded.
- They seem weak or confused.
- They are not urinating as often, and/or their urine is very dark.

Also, some people may be taking medicine that affects how much they need to drink and how often they need to go to the toilet. Watch carefully for these signs among the people you support because they may have trouble telling you when they feel sick.

If someone seems dehydrated, quickly give them something to drink, or let them suck on ice cubes or popsicles. Make sure they can rest for a while in a cool place. If a person is very dehydrated, they may need to see a doctor. For example, call the doctor if a person has not urinated in 8 hours or seems very dizzy. As always, whenever someone has diarrhea or is vomiting call their doctor. If their diarrhea or vomiting does not improve after several days, or if symptoms are worsening, call the doctor again.

What is wrong with this story?

Safe Swimming

For weeks Joyce has been excited about going swimming. While she loves the water, she cannot float or swim. To help her, Joyce's direct service provider, Karen, has given her some water wings and a fun blow-up tube. Karen is next to the pool the whole time Joyce is in the water. Sometimes she is talking on her phone and other times she reads her book.

Karen is not giving Joyce all the help she needs to stay safe in the water. This means that Joyce could drown. It's easy for a person to drown without calling for help, even in shallow water. Here's how Karen could better support Joyce:

- Karen should be in the water close to Joyce. Because Joyce cannot swim alone, sitting on the pool side will not let Karen respond quickly if Joyce suddenly needs help.
- Karen should never be distracted from supporting Joyce in the water. She needs to give Joyce her full attention and not do other things, like read a book.
- Karen should give Joyce a lifejacket - water wings and tubes can be fun, but these are not designed to keep swimmers safe.

Help the people you support to have fun in the sun this spring and summer by following these tips on staying hydrated and swimming safely.

FYI Resource Links for Better Living

For more information you can visit these websites:

Guidelines for swimming with people with developmental disabilities:

<http://www.ombudmhm.state.mn.us/alerts/07water.htm>

Information on seizures:

<http://www.epilepsyfoundation.org>

Information on tracking seizures:

http://www.epinet.org.au/epinet2004v/info/epinfo002_Tracking_Seizures.htm

Information for caregivers on seizures in children with developmental disabilities:

<http://www.epilepsyinstitute.org/faq/main2.htm#9>

Remember to visit the DDS Safety Net website for more information on what was covered in this newsletter!

Check out

www.ddssafety.net

for more information that can help individuals with developmental disabilities live healthier and happier lives!

The site is translated into Spanish and Tagalog!

Just log on and tell us what you think!