

Safety Strategies, Devices, and Monitors

Please note that Epilepsy Southwestern Ontario (ESWO) is not a provider or distributor of any of the devices listed here. This document is intended for informational purposes only, and ESWO cannot recommend or endorse any of the products listed. Always consult with your neurologist/health care provider for more information regarding seizure safety devices and monitors.

A seizure alert device can be used to alert caregivers of seizure activity. Some devices can detect convulsive or shaking movements experienced during tonic clonic or focal motor seizures*. Depending on the device, notifications in the form of phone calls, text messages, or alarms, are sent to a caregiver. Alerting a caregiver can be useful if a person needs to be repositioned onto their side, to call for medical help if an emergency occurs, or to administer rescue medication if necessary.

*Focal impaired awareness, absence, or other non motor seizures may not be detected, as these devices detect shaking motions or falls.

Devices and Alerts

- [MedicAlert](#)
- [Lifeline](#)
- [Easy Link](#)
- [SeizAlarm](#)
- [Embrace](#)
- [Smart Monitor](#)
- [Open Seizure Detector](#)

Helmets

- [Danmar](#)
- [Plum](#)
- [Guardian](#)

Video Monitors

- [SAMi](#)
- [Recording Devices](#) (any camera enabled with night vision and which detects motion – try deer hunting devices)
- [Lorex Camera System](#)

Financial Help

- [ADP](#) - Helmets and other alert devices may be a covered benefit on your health insurance plan. As well, the Ontario Assisted Devices Program (ADP) may cover up to 75 percent of a helmet.
- [Danny Did](#) - In some situations, clients may be eligible for financial aid through the Danny Did Foundation.
- MedicAlert - There is a possibility of receiving a MedicAlert subscription at a lower cost in certain circumstances. More information about the programs can be found at the following links: [The IDEA Program](#), [Membership Assistance Program Form](#).

The following information provided was sourced from *Epilepsy and Safety Education Series* produced by the Edmonton Epilepsy Foundation. These are recommendations for your consideration.

Common Seizure Triggers

- Forgetting to take prescribed anti seizure medication
- Lack of sleep
- Missed meals
- Stress, excitement, emotional upset
- Menstrual cycle / hormonal changes
- Illness or fever
- Low seizure medication levels
- Medications other than prescribed seizure medications
- Excessive alcohol consumption and subsequent withdrawal
- Flickering lights of computers, television, videos
- Street drugs (cocaine, amphetamines, ecstasy, LSD)
- Withdrawal from nonmedical cannabis

Safety at Home

- Use of hot appliances (stoves, irons) and open flames (fireplaces, candles) increases the risk of burns or a fire should a seizure occur. Smoking is also hazardous for those with seizures.
- Forced air heating is preferable to radiators, baseboards, and freestanding heaters. If your home has radiators, use radiator guards to increase safety.
- Bungalows or first floor apartments reduce the risks associated with stairs. Short sections of stairs with landings are preferable to long, steep staircases. If your home has stairs, a safety gate at the top of the stairs may help.
- Furniture with round rather than sharp edges is recommended. Sharp edges on tables and other furniture should be padded.
- Carpeting the floors, preferably with a thick underlay, may be necessary.

- Using appliances and tools with automatic shut off switches provides additional safety.
- Use outdoor carpeting on concrete steps, porches.

In Kitchens

- Use a microwave rather than a stove.
- If using a stove, use back burners.
- Place pot handles facing to the back of the stove.
- Serve hot liquids or food onto plates at the stove rather than carrying them to the table.
- Do not carry boiling water.
- If possible, cook when someone else is home.
- Use plastic rather than glass dishware in your kitchen.
- Use cups with lids.
- Limit the use of sharp knives. A blender or food processor is preferable.
- Use precut or prepared foods.
- Sit down to do tasks when possible.
- Place sharp utensils downwards in the dishwasher
- Wear rubber gloves if washing glass or using sharp utensils.
- Keep frequently used items within easy reach to avoid having to climb up to high cupboards.
- Keep electrical appliances away from sinks.

In Bathrooms

- Take showers rather than baths. Showers are safer than baths for those with epilepsy, but injuries can still occur. If you experience falls during a seizure, a low shower seat with a safety strap should be considered.
- Use a shower with a temperature monitor.
- Adjust the water heater to a lower temperature.
- Turn cold water on first and off last to prevent burns.

- Use rubber mats or non-skid strips on the floor of the shower.
- Shower when someone else is home.
- Use a handheld shower nozzle.
- Ensure that shower and bathtub drains are working properly.
- Use a recessed soap tray in showers.
- Use a shower with a flat floor rather than an enclosed base where water can accumulate.
- Do not lock bathroom doors. An “occupied” sign can be used to offer privacy.
- Avoid the use of electrical appliances near water.
- Hang bathroom doors to open outwards in case a fall against a closed door prevents access to those needing to assist you.
- Use mirrors and shower doors with safety glass or plastic.
- Use a padded toilet seat.
- Keep your bathroom ventilated to avoid overheating.

In Bedrooms

- Use a monitor in your bedroom so that someone who lives with you will be alerted if you have a seizure.
- Use beds low to the ground and avoid bunk beds.
- Avoid beds with hard edges on bed frames.
- Avoid waterbeds.
- Choose a foam pillow instead of a feather or cotton pillow. Some people may also choose to purchase an anti-suffocation pillow.
- Avoid sharp-edged night tables beside the bed.

In Living Rooms

- Avoid decorating with glass or mirrors.
- Consider using hanging lamps instead of floor or table lamps.

In Work Rooms

- Use a tabletop ironing board or one that is mounted on the wall.
- Use tools with automatic shutoffs.
- Sit at a low workbench.
- If using machinery, wear protective gear such as gloves, safety glasses, and boots.

In Parenting

- Use safety gates and playpens.
- Use a stroller rather than carrying your child, even in your own home.
- Use a stroller with brakes, a child harness, or a wrist bungee cord when you go out.
- Change diapers or clothes on a pad on the floor or on a change table that has a strap to secure your child.
- Keep supplies on each level of your home to avoid unnecessarily having to climb stairs with your child.
- If you are alone, give your baby a sponge bath rather than using a bathtub.
- Avoid carrying or drinking hot liquids or smoking near your child.
- Secure your baby into an infant seat on the floor or in a highchair for bottle feedings and meals.
- If you are breast-feeding, feed your baby while sitting on the floor surrounded by a soft surface.
- If sleep deprivation is one of your seizure triggers, then arrange for someone to help out with either night-time feedings or a daytime feeding when you can catch up on your sleep. Women who are breast-feeding can pump breast milk into a bottle so that others will be able to help with feedings.
- Keep outside doors and gates locked.
- Keep your seizure medication out of reach of children.
- When your child is old enough to understand, discuss your epilepsy with your child. This may alleviate some of the child’s concerns. It will also help your child to know how to respond if you have a seizure.

- Explain to your child what should be done in case of a seizure and post any emergency or contact phone numbers in an obvious place.
- Avoid related problems such as low blood sugar, dehydration, or overexertion, which could increase the risk of seizures.

Safety at Work

- Avoid work that involves heights, heavy machinery, extreme heat, fire, or molten material, or being over water.
- Use safety guards and automatic shutoffs if working with machinery or power tools.
- If using machinery, wear appropriate gloves, safety glasses, boots.
- Keep consistent work hours to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to avoid sleep deprivation.
- Learn coping methods to manage stress.
- Ensure that co-workers know appropriate first aid.
- Explore options regarding accommodation in the workplace.

Safety in Sports and Recreational Activities

- Take extra precaution in sports that increase the risk of head injury including contact sports such as football, hockey, karate, and soccer.
- Always use proper safety gear such as helmets, flotation devices, and knee and elbow pads.
- Avoid activities that are considered too dangerous such as scuba diving and rock climbing.
- Ride bicycles on side roads or bike paths.
- If you have uncontrolled seizures, do not swim without constant supervision. Swimming with a companion, preferably an experienced swimmer, is recommended for anyone who has seizures.
- Swim in a pool rather than open water.
- Exercise on soft rather than hard surfaces (mats, grass).
- Do activities such as skiing, boating, or hiking with a friend.
- Use a safety hook and strap when using a ski lift.
- Discuss participation in sports and recreational activities with your doctor.

- Inform lifeguards, coaches, counsellors, of your condition and how to respond should a seizure occur.
- If your seizures are induced by flickering light, wear polarized sunglasses during outdoor activities to reduce the effect of flickering light patterns such as sunlight reflecting on water.

Safety Whilst Travelling

- There are restrictions to driving if your seizures are not controlled. Driving is generally not allowed until you have been seizure free for at least 6 to 12 months, and you are under a doctor's care.
- Carry a copy of important medical information, phone numbers, and a list of your seizure medication with you.
- Ensure that you stand back from roads or the edge of platforms while travelling by bus or subway.
- Use elevators rather than escalators or stairs.
- Have someone accompany you if you are going to be outdoors during extremely hot or extremely low temperatures.
- If travelling by air, consider whether to inform airline officials of your condition in advance to allow for preparation in case of a seizure.
- Carry some seizure medication on your person in the event of lost luggage.
- Take all seizure medication in the original bottles that you will be needing during your stay in case of unavailability. Extra medication should also be taken in the event that some is lost or your stay is extended.
- If crossing time zones, ensure that you maintain your seizure medication schedule as prescribed.
- Before having a vaccination, ask your doctor about any medication interactions or concerns.
- Find out if travel companies provide discounted transportation for an escort capable of providing the required assistance if it is medically necessary.
- Wear a medical identification bracelet.