



Get to know

EPILEPSY-INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS

What is Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a neurological condition that causes individuals to have seizures, which can look different depending on the seizure type¹:

- Focal seizures- begins in one area of the brain
- Generalized seizures- affects both sides of the brain
- Unclassified- the area of the brain affected is not determined

What a seizure can look like¹

- Staring or unresponsiveness
- Involuntary movement of arms and legs
- Fainting spells
- A feeling of fear that can't be explained
- Excessive fatigue


How common is it?

- 1 in 26 people will develop Epilepsy in their lifetime²
- Almost 3 million people living in the United States have Epilepsy, which is approximately 1% of the population³

Myth Busters

- You have to put something in their mouth so they don't choke on their tongue- you should not do this, they will not choke on their tongue⁴
- Call an ambulance immediately- don't do this, follow their seizure plan⁴
- The person having a seizure will foam at the mouth- this is not true in all cases⁴
- Someone having a seizure will become violent- this is not the case⁴






What else may someone with Epilepsy experience?

- **Anxiety**- feelings of excessive worry⁵, which could look like reassurance seeking, difficulty paying attention, and physical complaints
- **Depression**- feeling down and little pleasure in activities⁶, which could look like social withdrawal from peers, lack of energy, and difficulty concentrating
- **Autism**- social difficulties and restrictive/repetitive behaviors⁶
- **Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**- inattention and hyperactivity⁵, which could look like restlessness, fidgeting, inability to stay still and/or spacing out and not paying attention
- **Learning disability**- difficulty with reading, writing, mathematics, and other areas of learning⁵
- **Cognitive impairment**⁵
- **Bone health problems**- weakness in bones leading to additional challenges like lowered physical activity⁵, which could look like less engagement in physical activities like gym and recess
- **Sleep disorders**⁵, which could look like excessive tiredness and sleepiness in class
- **Migraines and headaches**⁵, which could lead to frequent requests to go to the nurse
- **Chronic pain**⁶, which would look like frequent physical complaints and requests to go to the nurse
- **Bipolar Disorder**- fluctuations between elevated and depressed moods⁶

What can help?

- Engaging in teacher training that centers around key facts about the disorder and how to provide Epilepsy first aid can support personal knowledge, attitudes, and performance⁷
 - Counseling from a mental health professional in the school can help children and adolescents cope with the mental health challenges⁸ associated with living with Epilepsy
 - Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) can help link thoughts, feelings, and behaviors commonly experienced by this population. Counselors or school psychologists with training in CBT can hold therapeutic sessions for students with Epilepsy.⁹
 - Peer support groups can help children and adolescents with Epilepsy feel more connected and reduce stigma about their condition.⁹ These can be run by school counselors, social workers, and school psychologists in the school
 - Medications and surgeries can help reduce the occurrence of seizures.¹⁰ Encourage caregivers to consult with their pediatrician to discuss the use of these treatments.
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Useful Organizations

For more information about epilepsy, please check out these websites:

- Epilepsy Foundation
<https://www.epilepsy.com>
- Epilepsy Alliance America
<https://epilepsyallianceamerica.org>

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