

Dr. Chalfin's Guide to Seizure Safety and Treatment

Seizures are caused by sudden, abnormal electrical activity in the brain. There are many treatment options for seizures, including different types of medications. Each medication has its own possible benefits, side effects, and risks. The goal is to stop seizures while keeping side effects as low as possible.^[1]

Treatment Options

- There are over 20 approved medications for seizures. The choice depends on the type of seizure, age, other health conditions, and possible side effects.^[1]
- Some people may need more than one medication, and a few may need other treatments like surgery if medications do not work.^[2]
- It is important to take medications exactly as prescribed and not to stop them suddenly.

Side Effects and When to Call the Clinic

- Common side effects can include tiredness, dizziness, mood changes, or stomach upset. Most are mild and go away with time.^[3]
- If any significant side effect occurs, especially a rash, stop the medication and contact the clinic immediately. Some rashes can be serious and need quick medical attention.^{[1][3]}
- Always call 911 if you have trouble breathing, swelling, or any new or severe symptoms.

Seizure Precautions and Safety

- Driving and Biking (Florida Law):
 - o If taking medication and following up regularly, no driving or bike riding for one year after the last seizure.
 - o If not taking medication, no driving for two years after the last seizure.
- Do not operate heavy machinery.
- Do not swim in open water or bathe in a tub alone.
- Do not cook over open flames.
- Do not climb ladders or go to heights.
- Avoid any activity that could be dangerous if you lose awareness or consciousness.^{[4][5][6]}

Avoiding Seizure Triggers

- Get enough sleep every night.
- Avoid alcohol and recreational drugs, including marijuana, unless directed by your neurologist.
- Take medications on time, every day.
- Tell all of your doctors about your history of seizures as some prescribed medications can also lower the threshold for seizures.
- Other triggers can include low blood sugar, head injury, excess heat/cold, stress, sleep deprivation, dehydration, bright/flashing lights, loud sounds
- Some people have triggers like flashing lights, missing meals, low blood sugar, dehydration, head injury, excess heat or cold, stress, or loud sounds—learn what affects you and try to avoid those triggers.^{[1][4]}

What to Do if a Seizure Happens

- Stay calm and keep the person safe.
- Move them away from sharp or dangerous objects.
- Do not put anything in their mouth.
- Turn them on their side if possible.
- Time the seizure. If it lasts more than 2 minutes, administer Valtoco nasal spray if available.
- Call 911 if seizure lasts longer than 5 minutes, if seizures are occurring frequently, or if they don't return to their baseline within 20 minutes of their seizure.^{[7][8]}

Other Important Information

- Education and written seizure action plans help patients and caregivers feel more confident and prepared.^[9]
- There is a rare but serious risk of sudden unexpected death in epilepsy (SUDEP). This risk is higher if seizures are not controlled. Taking medication as prescribed and following safety advice can help lower this risk.^[9]

If you have any questions or concerns, contact the clinic. Never stop or change your medication without talking to your neurologist.

References

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