

## Safety & You

If you have epilepsy, you may have seizures that make you black out or fall. You're probably taking medicine to prevent them. The medicine may be working well. Or you may still be having some seizures. Most seizures will not hurt you. But you can get hurt if you have seizures in certain places. Some dangers are easy to spot, like deep water or the edge of a cliff. Some hide in places that you never think of as dangerous – like the average kitchen or bathroom. Does this mean you have to stop doing everything and not go anywhere at all? No. Chances are, just a few simple changes can help you be safe and still lead an active life. The trick is to think and plan ahead.

## Outside

- If you ski or hike, go with a friend; you may need someone to get help if you have a seizure in remote areas.
- Consider use of a safety strap and hook when riding the ski lift.
- Wear head protection when playing contact sports or when there is an added risk of falling or head injury.

## House Safety Tips

- Carpet the floors in your house or apartment with heavy pile and thick under padding.
- Pad sharp corners of tables and other furniture; look for rounded corners when you shop.
- Use long, heavy duty oven mitts or holders when reaching into a hot oven.
- Put guards around the fireplace or, preferably, close fireplace screens while a fire is burning.
- Don't smoke or light fires when you're by yourself.
- Don't carry hot fireplace ashes or lighted candles through the house.
- Avoid space heaters that can tip over.
- Use curling irons or clothing irons with automatic shut off switches to prevent burns.
- Select chairs with arms to prevent falling.
- Make sure motor-driven equipment, such as a lawn mower, has a handle that will stop the machine if your hand releases normal pressure.

## Bathroom Safety Tips

- Hang bathroom doors so they open outwards instead of inwards (so that if someone falls against the door, it can still be opened).
- Put extra padding under carpeting in the bathroom.
- Hang an "occupied" sign on the outside handle of the bathroom door, instead of locking it.
- Routinely check that the bathroom drain works properly before taking a bath or shower.
- If you fall frequently during seizures, consider using a shower or tub seat with a safety strap.
- Consider using a hand held shower nozzle while seated in tub or shower.
- Set water temperature low so that you won't be burned if you lose consciousness while hot water is running.
- Avoid using electrical appliances, such as a hair dryer or electric razor, in the bathroom or near water.

## Safety for Children

It's easy to worry if your child has a disabling condition like epilepsy, but you can make your house and everyday activities safer with a few simple adjustments:

- A monitor in your child's bedroom may alert you to the sound of a typical seizure.
- Avoid top bunks. A lower bunk, a regular bed, a futon or even a mattress on the floor is a safer place to sleep for a child with seizures.
- A well fitting-helmet with a face guard may protect against head and facial injuries from severe drop seizures.
- Have your child wear a life vest when near water, including the backyard pool.
- Closely supervise showers.
- Put a list of first-aid steps on the refrigerator or some other place where it's easy to find.
- When you have babysitters, go over first-aid steps, write down the phone number where you or a relative can be reached; include the doctor's number and the one for the emergency squad on the same sheet.
- If your child is going to sleep at a friend's or relative's house overnight, make sure a copy of the list goes along, too, and that an adult in the house knows what to expect and what to do if a seizure happens.
- Not every childhood injury is preventable, whether or not a child has seizures. Try to strike a balance between safety and overprotection.

**For more information visit [www.efmn.org](http://www.efmn.org), call 800.779.0777 (ext. 2310) or stop by The Epilepsy Foundation of Minnesota's office at 1600 University Avenue West, Suite 300 in St. Paul.**