

Babysitting is a valuable service to the community. It is important for parents of children with epilepsy to be able to find babysitters when they need them. Looking after a child with epilepsy is usually no different than looking after any other child. It is important for babysitters to know about epilepsy and what to do in case of a seizure. It is a good idea for all babysitters to be trained in first aid and CPR. Classes for first aid, CPR and babysitting courses can be found through community services and St. John Ambulance.

Seizure Disorders

Seizures are caused by abnormal electrical activity in the brain. If this happens repeatedly, it is called epilepsy. Anyone can have a seizure from injury or illness. Most seizures can be controlled with medication that is taken regularly and the child you are babysitting will likely not have a seizure while in your care. It is important for you to know what their medication looks like, when you are to give it and exactly how much you are to give.

If you are going to look after a child that has seizures, it would be a good idea to spend some time at the child's house before you actually sit with them. This way you will get to know the child and also see the routines the child is use to following. It is a good idea to discuss with the parents what the seizures are like and how they will affect him. It is a good idea to make up an information sheet with the family that lists the type and frequency of seizures, medication name and dosage, bedtime, activities the child is allowed and not allowed to do and contact numbers for parents, doctor's name and the ambulance number if not 911.

Simple First Aid

If the child suddenly cries, passes out, stiffens and/or shakes:

- If possible try to cushion falls
- Remain calm
- Turn the child on his/her side to prevent choking and pooling of secretions
- Remove hard objects from around the child
- Loosen tight clothing and remove eyeglasses
- Never force anything into the mouth. It is impossible to swallow your tongue
- Stay with the child and allow them to rest after the seizure
- Comfort the child as he starts to wake up afterwards. Some children will be tired after having a seizure. Some may be confused or cranky and cry for a while. Ask the parents what to expect after a seizure.

If the child has staring spells:

- These usually last only a few seconds and the child may not even know they had a seizure
- No first aid is required for this type of seizures.

If the child seems dazed and confused and wanders around looking dazed:

- Remain calm, and talk to the child quietly and calmly
- Stay with the child and guide him away from danger
- Don't try to hold the person still as he/she may struggle or fight with you
- Remain with the child and allow them to rest after the seizure
- Encourage them to go back to normal activity if they feel able

Call for an ambulance if:

- The seizure last longer than five minutes
- The child is having difficulty breathing
- The child does not regain consciousness soon after the seizure ends
- Another seizure starts soon after the first one ends
- A seizure happens in a child that does not have epilepsy or has never had a seizure before
- The parents have asked you to.

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