



When Mom or Dad has Epilepsy

What does epilepsy mean?

Epilepsy means a person has had more than one seizure, and there's a good chance he or she may have more.

What is a seizure?

A seizure is something that happens when, for a few minutes, a person's brain doesn't work quite right. It's like an electric short circuit, or like a television signal that doesn't get through for just a minute.

What happens when mom or dad has a seizure?

When moms or dads have seizures, their bodies do things they can't control. Not everybody who has seizures acts the same way. Some people's arms move up and down. Other people fall down and start shaking. Some people who are having a seizure may seem like they're staring at something, or like they can't hear what you're saying. They may not be able to answer you when you talk to them. They may say things that don't make sense.

Do seizures hurt?

When people have a seizure, they don't feel any pain. As long as they don't bump into anything while having the seizure, they won't hurt themselves. And people do not die when they have a seizure. Most people feel and act normal again as soon as the seizure is over. And most seizures only last a short time.

Will anything help make my mom's or dad's seizures go away?

A doctor will give your mom or dad medicine to help the seizures stop. Your mom or dad may have to try different kinds of medicine before finding one that will make the seizures stop. Sometimes, medicine can stop the seizures from happening most of the time, but not all the time.

Will my mom's or dad's seizures ever go away?

Some people who have epilepsy stop having seizures after a while. Other people have seizures their whole lives. Some people with epilepsy don't have seizures as long as they take their medicine, but start having them again if they stop taking their medicine. Doctors are still trying to learn exactly how to make epilepsy go away.

Why do some moms and dads have seizures?

A lot of times no one really knows why people have seizures. But we do know that it's not anybody's fault. It's not your mom or dad's fault. And it's certainly not your fault.

Can I "catch" my mom or dad's seizures, the way I can catch a cold from someone?

No. You can get as close as you like to someone who has seizures and never catch them.

But if my mom or dad has seizures, does that mean I will have them too?

Very few children whose moms or dads have seizures have them too, and overall, moms and dads with seizures have them pretty infrequently. If you are worried about having seizures, you might want to talk about this with your mom or dad, or your doctor. Sometimes, talking about scary things can make them seem not so bad.

Will the seizures make it hard sometimes for my mom or dad to take care of me?

Most moms and dads with seizures can still do all the really important things that you need them to do. But sometimes, things may have to wait. While moms and dads are having a seizure, they can't walk you to a friend's house or read you a book. For a few hours after the seizure ends, your mom or dad may need to rest, or go to the doctor or the hospital for a little while. It might be a good idea for you and your parents to talk about choosing an adult you know and like who can take care of you if mom or dad isn't feeling well.

Is there anything I can do to help my mom or dad feel better during a seizure, or after it?

Talk to your mom or dad about what you can do to help. Maybe together, you could come up with a list of helpful things you can post on your refrigerator or somewhere else in your house that's easy to see. It's also important to know how to call 911 if mom or dad gets hurt during the seizure, or doesn't wake up after a seizure.

Remember, just being understanding helps, too. This means realizing that sometimes there's nothing your mom or dad can do to stop the seizures. You just have to be patient.

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You can join the BC Epilepsy Society as a member and receive all the program and service benefits.

#510 – 999 West Broadway, Vancouver, BC V5Z 1K5

Phone: (604) 875-6704 Fax: (604) 875-0617 info@bcepilepsy.com www.bcepilepsy.com