

# Mersey Region Epilepsy Association

Registered Charity Number: 404366



## parents with epilepsy

All parents who have epilepsy will know how important safety measures are in the home. The presence of babies and young children, however, means that further precautions may have to be taken to ensure that they are safe during an epileptic attack. Parents who have warning of seizures, or know what time they are likely to occur, will have less of a problem than those whose attacks are irregular and without prior warning. General information about child care is of course available from ante-natal clinics.

It is best for a mother to tell her Health Visitor about her epilepsy early in the pregnancy, the form it takes and the medication prescribed. She will then be in a position to advise you on specific points.

Most people with epilepsy take some kind of medication which helps to control their condition. From the point of view of the mother with epilepsy it is very important that you check with your doctor before attempting to breast feed your baby. The effects of medication could be harmful to your baby if transferred in breast milk, although in general only very tiny amounts of drugs are present in breast milk.

For bottle feeding the usual position is sitting nursing the baby. It may be more practical however, if you think you are liable to have a seizure, to strap the baby into a plastic chair. Carrying the baby around the house could be hazardous if you either dropped the baby during a seizure or fell onto him. By using a carrycot and transporter wheels in the home you will reduce this risk. A playpen or baby bouncer will also help to keep the baby safe.

The fact that you are a parent with epilepsy will create no physical problems in terms of baby care. Certain activities may require special procedures. For example, you may find it more practical to wash the baby on a mat or in the cot with a bowl of water outside the cot so that, should you have a seizure, the baby cannot come to any harm. It is unwise to wash the baby in an adult bath if you are alone in the house and liable to have a seizure with resulting unconsciousness.

The presence of tablets in the home creates potential dangers for every parent and child. Children like to copy adults and if you regularly take pills your child will watch and want to imitate you. As the child grows older, explain why you take your tablets and explain about any seizures you may have. Children learn quickly how to be useful, preventing you from harming yourself and taking care of any younger children during a seizure.

All safety measures in the home need to be very thorough. With an active child around it might be safer to postpone tasks such as ironing if this is at all possible. Alternatively, use a gate on the kitchen door to be sure that the child cannot come to any harm if you have a seizure whilst cooking or ironing. It would be wise to have a cooker guard to prevent pans being pulled off the hob.

Safety outside the home for your child is also worth extra attention. Be sure that your garden is well fenced and has a bolted or locked gate ensuring that young children will not come to harm if you should have a seizure whilst they are playing in the garden. In the street it is difficult to protect the child adequately. If you are using a pushchair always attach a safety harness. If your child is walking it might be wise to use reins attached to your wrist until the child is old enough to really understand that he must stay near you if you should have a seizure.

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