

**To my teacher:**

**From:**

**I am going to be in your class this year and I want you to know that I have epilepsy. Even though I have this disorder, I want you to treat me like you do everyone else. I want to learn, play games and have friends. But I also want you to know more about my seizure disorder and what you can do to help me if I have a seizure while I am at school.**

### **General Information about Epilepsy**

Epilepsy is a seizure disorder resulting from sudden bursts of electrical energy in the brain. These electrical discharges produce seizures which vary from one person to another in frequency and in form. Epilepsy is not a disease, it is a disorder, and it is not contagious. Only 25% of all cases of epilepsy have an identifiable cause. In some people, the cause of epilepsy may be a scar, tumour, stroke, or poisoning from substance or environmental contaminants. In the other 75% of cases, there is no known cause.

Epilepsy is actually very common. At least 1 in 100 people have ongoing seizures which require medical attention. In most cases, seizures can be controlled with drug therapy.

There are 2 main types of seizures: partial seizures and generalized seizures. **Partial seizures** affect only specific areas of the brain. While consciousness is not lost during these types of seizures, the person may not remember anything that happened during the seizure. There are 2 principal forms of partial seizures: simple partial and complex partial. **Generalized seizures** affect the entire cortex of the brain and thus affect the entire body. There are 2 principal forms of generalized seizures: tonic-clonic and absence.

**I have:** (check all that apply)

#### **Simple Partial Seizures** (formerly called *focal cortical* seizures)

- These seizures are limited to one area of my brain.
- I will not lose consciousness during a seizure but I may not be able to control my body movements.
- My senses may be distorted causing me to see, hear, or smell experiences that are not real.
- I may have unusual feelings.
- This type of seizure usually lasts 2 to 10 seconds, although it may last longer.

### **What You Can Do to Help**

- I will need comfort and reassurance if I seem confused following a seizure.

### **Special Instructions**

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## **Complex Partial Seizures** (formerly called *psychomotor* or *temporal lobe* seizures)

- These seizures may cause me to express a variety of inappropriate automatic behaviours (tapping the desk, picking at my clothes, making chewing movements, wandering around).
- I may lose awareness of my surroundings.
- This type of seizure usually lasts 2 to 4 minutes.
- My recovery will be gradual and I may feel confused for awhile after a seizure.
- I won't be able to remember what happened during the seizure.

### **What You Can Do to Help**

- If I am wandering, you can gently lead me back to my seat.
- Speak to me calmly and reassure me.
- Do not grab me or speak loudly.  
Guide me away from obvious hazards (stairs, play equipment, Bunsen burners).
- If I am confused afterward, help orient me to what just happened.

### **Special Instructions**

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## **Absence Seizures** (formerly called *petit mal* seizures)

- This seizure type looks like a staring spell or daydreaming and can therefore go unnoticed.
- I may experience brief loss of consciousness accompanied by eye blinking, slight muscle movements around the mouth, or arm movements.
- These seizures may be frequent but each usually lasts only 2-10 seconds.
- After the seizure, I will regain full awareness and I will be able to resume full activity.

### **What You Can Do to Help**

- Let me know what I missed from the lesson/activity once I regain awareness.
- You may want to pair me up with a buddy who can tell me what I missed during the seizure.

### **Special Instructions**

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## ☐ **Tonic-Clonic Seizures** (formerly *grand mal* seizures)

- At the start of the seizure, I will emit a short cry or groan as my chest muscles contract, forcing all of the air out of my lungs.
- I will fall unconscious, my muscles will stiffen and then my extremities will jerk and twitch.
- I may lose bladder and/or bowel control.
- My eyes may roll back in my head.
- I may drool.
- If I bleed from the mouth, it is probably because I have bitten my tongue.
- My breathing may be shallow or even stop temporarily, then return once the jerking movements stop. This will cause my pulse to be weak and my skin and lips to turn bluish. But the colour will come back once I begin breathing again.
- These seizures usually last 1 to 3 minutes but they may last up to 5 minutes.
- I may be confused and tired when I regain consciousness.

### **What You Can Do to Help**

1. **Keep Calm.** Seizures may appear frightening to the onlooker. They usually last only a few minutes and generally do not require medical attention. Remember that I will be unaware of my actions and will not be able to hear you.
2. **Protect me from further injury.** Ease me to the floor. Move any hard, sharp or hot objects well away. Protect my head and body from injury. Loosen any tight neckwear.
3. **Do not restrain me.** Once a seizure has started, you cannot stop it — just let it run its course.
4. **Do not insert anything in my mouth.** I will not swallow my tongue. Attempting to force my mouth open may break my teeth or cause other oral injuries.
5. **Roll me onto my side after the seizure subsides.** This will enable saliva to flow from my mouth, helping to ensure I have an open air passage. If I vomit, keep me on my side and clear out my mouth with your finger.
6. **If a seizure lasts longer than 5 minutes, or repeats without full recovery —  
SEEK MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IMMEDIATELY.**  
This may be a condition called *status epilepticus*. Although it rarely occurs, it is a serious medical emergency.
7. **Talk gently.** After my seizure, comfort and reassure me. I may need to rest or sleep after the seizure.

Some children recover quickly after this type of seizure while others need more time. The child may require a short period of rest depending on the child's level of awareness following a seizure. If the child is able to remain in the classroom following a seizure s/he should be encouraged to do so. A change of clothing may be required if the child has lost bladder/bowel control. The parents may wish to leave a change of clothing in the health office or in the main office.

### **Special Instructions**

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## ❑ Other Generalized Seizures (including akinetic, atonic, myoclonic seizures)

- These seizures produce changes in muscle tone which may cause me to fall abruptly or cause parts of my whole body to jerk.
- These seizures are more difficult to control than the previous types and may sometimes be accompanied by a developmental delay.

### What You Can Do to Help

- Make sure that I haven't been injured during the seizure.
- Provide me with reassurance.
- Allow me to sit quietly until I feel fully recovered.

### Special Instructions

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### For any seizure type, call for help when:

- ∂ a seizure lasts longer than 5 minutes or starts again after a few minutes.  
This could be *status epilepticus*, which requires immediate assistance.
- ∂ a child who doesn't have a history of seizures has one.
- ∂ the child has a seizure in the water.
- ∂ a child who is ill experiences a seizure.
- ∂ the child feels any unusual pain after the seizure. This can be a symptom of seizure-related injury.
- ∂ the child has hit his/her head during the seizure.
- ∂ the child experiences laboured breathing or chest pain.
- ∂ consciousness does not return after the seizure.
- ∂ pupils of the eyes are different sizes or dilated (bigger) after the seizure.
- ∂ the child feels confused for more than an hour after a seizure.  
(Temporary confusion following a seizure is normal.)

### Things to Remember

- ∂ **Stay calm** during any type of seizure.
- ∂ Time how long the seizure lasts and record any pertinent information to report to the parents.
- ∂ The brain almost always stops the seizures safely and naturally.
- ∂ Only in emergencies, doctors use drugs to bring a non-stop seizure to an end.
- ∂ Most people don't feel pain during a seizure, although muscles might be sore afterward.
- ∂ Seizures are not dangerous to others.