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## **Epilepsy: Did You Know That?**

### **Epilepsy Facts**

- ★ Epilepsy is the tendency to have recurring seizures.
- ★ 1 in 115 people have epilepsy – that's over 37,000 people with epilepsy in Ireland.
- ★ Any person can develop epilepsy and it can begin at any age.
- ★ Most people have no cause identified for their epilepsy.
- ★ Most people with epilepsy have no family history of epilepsy.
- ★ Epilepsy can be acquired from a brain injury, stroke or brain infection.
- ★ Many people with epilepsy have normal tests, scans and EEGs.
- ★ Epilepsy is controllable by medication in 70% of cases.
- ★ Surgery is an option for some people – and can have a very successful outcome.
- ★ Epilepsy medication is free of charge for everyone on the Long Term Illness Scheme.

### **Seizures**

- ★ A seizure is a brief interruption to the brain's normal electrical functioning.
- ★ 1 in 20 people have a single seizure at some point but don't develop epilepsy.
- ★ In seizures people can lose consciousness fully, partly or not at all.
- ★ Seizures vary greatly between people - there are over 40 kinds of seizures.
- ★ Most major seizures are over between 1-3 minutes.
- ★ Things that can trigger seizures include excess alcohol, skipped meals and missed sleep.
- ★ Absences are brief (typically 5-10 seconds) staring spells often mistaken for day-dreaming
- ★ During some seizures a person may wander, seem confused or behave inappropriately.
- ★ Prolonged seizures (5 minutes plus) are treatable with emergency medication.
- ★ A Vagus Nerve Stimulator is a device which helps some people control seizures.

## Common Misconceptions

- ★ Epilepsy is not a mental illness or a learning disability.
- ★ Epilepsy is not a paranormal, supernatural or psychic phenomenon.
- ★ Most people with epilepsy (95-97%) are not affected by flashing lights.
- ★ Every seizure doesn't damage the nerve cells in the brain.

## First Aid & Safety

- ★ Nothing should be put in someone's mouth during a seizure
- ★ A person should not be moved during a seizure (unless in immediate danger, height, busy road, etc)
- ★ Safety precautions in the home can greatly reduce risk of seizure related injury.
- ★ Complete seizure control greatly reduces risk of SUDEP (Sudden Death in Epilepsy)
- ★ People with epilepsy can swim once accompanied.
- ★ People with epilepsy can participate in most sports.
- ★ Women with epilepsy require close specialist monitoring in pregnancy.
- ★ A seizure alarm can detect seizures with movement and dial a number for help.

## Living & Working with Epilepsy

- ★ People with epilepsy have the same range of ability as everyone else.
- ★ Epilepsy is not normally a bar to most jobs (but being a pilot is one case where it is).
- ★ When seizures are controlled people have wider options regarding careers.
- ★ People with epilepsy can usually use computers safely (even if photosensitive)
- ★ Most people with epilepsy can drive a car once they are 1 year free of seizures.
- ★ ...and drive a lorry or bus if they are 10 years seizure free and off medication.
- ★ People who have seizures only in sleep can drive if they have that pattern for 1 year.
- ★ Epilepsy does not prevent someone having a relationship or becoming a parent.
- ★ Epilepsy doesn't prevent people travelling by plane or going on holiday.