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The Social Services Centre, Henry Street, Limerick
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Westside Resource Centre, Seamus Quirke Rd,
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Unit 1A Partnership Court, Park Street, Dundalk
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Grand Central Complex, Suite 2B, Canal Road,
Letterkenny.
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Model & Niland Arts Gallery, The Mall, Sligo
Tel -071-9141858

TRAINING FOR SUCCESS
Pre-Employment Training Course
Institute of Technology, Ballinode, Sligo
Tel: 071-9155303

Epilepsy Specialist Nurse Telephone Helpline
Monday 9.30am - 1.00pm
Tel: 01 4554133

**HOW CAN YOU HELP SOMEONE
HAVING A SEIZURE**

KEEP CALM

- You cannot stop a seizure once it has started.
- Simply let the seizure run its course and do not try to restrain the person's movements.
- Only move the person if they are in danger.
- If the person has fallen to the ground, place something soft, such as a rolled up coat or a cushion beneath the head.
- Turn the person onto his or her side as soon as possible. Never put anything into the person's mouth.
- Stay with the person until full consciousness returns.
- An ambulance is not necessary unless
 - The seizure lasts longer than 5 minutes
 - One seizure runs into another without recovery in between
 - The person is injured, pregnant or has another medical condition.

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Your Guide To Epilepsy

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Online Support Group: support.epilepsy.ie

WHO IS AFFECTED?

Epilepsy is the most common serious neurological disorder affecting people of all ages. According to recent research carried out by Epilepsy Ireland, there are at least 37,000 people with epilepsy in Ireland. Epilepsy can affect anyone at anytime. However, the majority of people with epilepsy have their first seizure before the age of 20 years or in later life.

There are many reasons why people develop epilepsy. Some people just appear to have a highly sensitive brain i.e. a low seizure threshold. Epilepsy can result from brain damage caused before or after birth or by infection or tumour. Epilepsy can follow a head injury such as the kind sustained in a road accident. Epilepsy can occur in the elderly when the blood supply to the brain becomes impaired in the process of ageing. Alcohol or drug abuse can cause epilepsy. Often no cause is identified. Recent research has also highlighted that there may be a genetic component with some epilepsies.

WHAT IS EPILEPSY?

Epilepsy is a chronic condition characterised by a tendency to have recurring, spontaneous seizures. It is not a disease, nor is it contagious. Many people will have a single seizure sometime in the course of their lives but it does not constitute epilepsy. Our brains are made up of millions of nerve cells called neurons. A seizure occurs when the normal working of these neurons is suddenly and temporarily disturbed.

SEIZURES

There are many different types of seizures. Some of the common types are:-

ABSENCE SEIZURE

The person, often a child, looks blank for a few seconds, is momentarily unaware of people and things around him or her but very quickly returns to full consciousness without falling or loss of muscle control.

TONIC CLONIC SEIZURE

The person may cry out as he or she falls to the ground unconscious. The body stiffens briefly and then may begin jerking. The face may turn blue and a frothy saliva may appear around the mouth. Some people experience tongue biting and may be incontinent of urine. Tonic clonic seizures vary in length and help should be sought if a seizure lasts more than 5 minutes. The person may be tired or confused for a while afterwards.

COMPLEX PARTIAL SEIZURE

The symptoms of this type of seizure are very variable but are usually short, constant and specific for the individual. The person may appear confused and repeat movements automatically or may experience a strange sensation, a feeling of fear or a sick feeling in the stomach. People sometimes use the words fit, attack, convulsion or turn instead of the word seizure.

TREATMENT

Epilepsy can be controlled by the appropriate drug treatment in the majority of cases.

There are a number of different anti-epileptic drugs and different drugs are prescribed for different types of epilepsy. Sometimes the tendency to have seizures diminishes with time and it may be possible to withdraw the drugs altogether once the person has been free from seizures for at least two years. This must be discussed with your doctor or epilepsy nurse. Drugs, to be effective, must be taken regularly and reliably and should only be reduced or withdrawn under medical supervision. People with epilepsy are entitled to their anti-epileptic medication free of charge. If a person does not have a medical card, he or she can obtain the Long Term Illness Book through the Health Service Executive.

Some people are able to reduce the number of seizures they have by avoiding certain things and situations that trigger their seizures. These could include lack of sleep, alcohol, not taking medication as prescribed and excessive stress. In a very small proportion of cases, surgery- the removal of the part of the brain where the seizures are known to be originating- can be effective treatment. For refractory generalised seizures a vagus nerve stimulator may be considered.

Some people however, continue to have seizures despite being appropriately treated. Greater understanding and acceptance by the public is a major factor affecting the well-being of people with epilepsy, especially those who continue to have seizures.