
From: Epilepsy South Africa [mailto:info@epilepsy.org.za]
Sent: 15 June 2009 11:56
To: funddev.no@epilepsy.org.za
Subject: South Africa National Epilepsy Week, Day 3 - Preview



June 2009

Dear Epilepsy Advocate

Today is the third day of South Africa National Epilepsy Week.

We will be celebrating this time by sharing information on the different aspects of the lives of people with epilepsy. Each day will be accompanied by a short video to be viewed on you tube. Something that can easily be sent to friends and colleagues. Here is the link to today's video <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r-aTlgbL38o>

Let's talk Epilepsy!

June E-news Contents:

- [South Africa National Epilepsy Week Day 3:"Right to quality medication"](#)

South Africa National Epilepsy Week Day 3:"Right to quality medication"

In a country where one in every one hundred people has epilepsy it would seem feasible that more is known about the condition and available medical treatment. This is not the case. In fact a very small percentage of people with epilepsy (especially in rural areas) is fully aware of what the condition entails. People with epilepsy often don't have a relationship with a medical professional that can advise them and provide information to

them, their families and the community.

For a person with epilepsy co-operation between him/her and the doctor is essential in establishing optimum control of the condition. The more accurately you can describe your seizures and the effects of the medication, the more precise will be your doctor's treatment and prescriptions. It is important that drugs are taken exactly as prescribed. Drug compliance is a major factor in the overall results that can be achieved. A pharmacist can also assist with information and advice about your medication.

The standard treatment for epilepsy is the regular use of one or more chemical substances called anti-epileptic or anti-convulsant drugs. The ideal situation is when a person takes as little medication as possible while maintaining seizure control. Over the past decade there have been a number of developments with new and more specific drugs becoming available. This does not mean that "older" drugs have become obsolete. In fact, newer medication may not be suitable at all for some people.

In all cases it is essential to discuss your needs and queries regarding medication with your doctor. Special consideration must be given in respect of drugs for children with epilepsy since the effects of medication may differ from adults.

Some drugs (including anti-convulsants) may cause side effects in some people. It is important to note any side effects and to discuss these with your neurologist to enable him/her to find the optimum treatment for you as an individual. It is equally important that people close to you (e.g. family and friends) are aware of these side effects to enable them to assist you when and if required. Should you require information regarding potential side effects of any medication, please discuss this with your neurologist or pharmacist. This is particularly important when taking two or more types of medication, including over-the-counter medication.

Certain drugs have proven to be harmful to unborn children. It is advisable for a woman considering pregnancy to discuss her situation with her doctor prior to becoming pregnant. This will ensure that she is informed of any risks that may exist and the options available to her.

When a person is taking more than one type of medication the drugs may interact with each other and change their effect. It is essential that you inform your doctor about any other drugs you are taking. This is particularly important when taking any chronic medication (e.g. anti-retroviral drugs prescribed to treat HIV/AIDS).

The interaction between oral contraceptives and anti-epileptic drugs (particularly carbamazepine, phenobarbitone and phenytoin) is such that the effectiveness of the contraception is reduced. Women with epilepsy should therefore obtain specific advice regarding contraception options.

Alcohol taken with anti-epileptic drugs poses a problem and is best avoided. A balanced diet with adequate nutrients and daily water intake is advised for optimal drug absorption.

About 80% of people with epilepsy can effectively control their seizures with medication. If correct anti-convulsants and supporting services are readily available more people will experience improved quality of life.

What to do during a seizure

DO...

- Remain calm and note the time and duration of the seizure.
- Clear a space around the person and prevent others from crowding around.
- Loosen tight clothing/neckwear and remove spectacles.
- Cushion the person's head to prevent injury.
- Put the person into the shock recovery position (i.e. roll the person onto his/her side with the top leg bent and the bottom arm slightly extended).
- Wipe away any excess saliva to facilitate breathing.
- Reassure and assist the person until he/she has recovered or become re-orientated.
- Allow the person to rest/sleep if necessary, covering him/her with a blanket.
- Note the duration of the seizure and the time it took place. Provide this information to the person who had the seizure after he/she has recovered fully. This will allow him/her to record the information in his/her seizure diary.

DO NOT...

- Restrict or restrain the person's movements.
- Move the person unless the person might hurt him/herself or is in immediate danger (i.e. in a busy road).
- Put anything between the person's teeth or in the person's mouth.
- Give anything to eat or drink during the seizure.
- Give extra anti-convulsants unless instructed to do so by a neurologist.
- Call a doctor or an ambulance unless the person has injured him/herself badly, the seizure lasts longer than 6 minutes or the person has repeated seizures without recovering!

OUR NATIONAL CONTACT NUMBER 0860374537

Please see the article on day one for:

- Information on epilepsy

Please see the article on day two for:

- Children with epilepsy have the right to quality education

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