

---

**From:** Epilepsy South Africa [mailto:info@epilepsy.org.za]  
**Sent:** 18 June 2009 11:34  
**To:** funddev.no@epilepsy.org.za  
**Subject:** South Africa National Epilepsy Week, Day 4 - Preview



*June 2009*

### **Dear Epilepsy Advocate**

Today is the fourth 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=mEkLwKJPLr4>

Let's talk Epilepsy!

---

### **June E-news Contents:**

- [June 18, South Africa National Epilepsy Week Day #4:People with epilepsy have the right not to be stigmatized](#)

**June 18, South Africa National Epilepsy Week Day #4:People with epilepsy have the right not to be stigmatized**

Correct facts about epilepsy are helping people with the condition to live normal lives and even to excel despite the challenges they face. People with epilepsy are often demotivated and prohibited from reaching their true potential by myths and stigma that exist in society. If society in general accepts the truth about epilepsy and stops the rumors and frightening thoughts surrounding the condition, the quality of life of people with epilepsy will improve dramatically enabling them to live healthier lives in every aspect.

Many ancient myths exist about epilepsy and some superstitions remain even in modern society. In some cultures people with epilepsy are still shunned, locked up in psychiatric institutions or even forbidden to marry or have children. Seizures are thought to be caused by witchcraft, insanity, possession by demons, feeble-mindedness and even masturbation.

Epilepsy affects more people than cerebral palsy, cancer, tuberculosis, muscular dystrophy and multiple sclerosis combined and can occur at any time in life. For many people the cause of epilepsy is unknown (idiopathic epilepsy), but the leading cause in adults is car accidents, birth trauma for children and strokes for people over the age of 65.

Here are some myth busters:

1. You can swallow your tongue during a seizure. It's physically impossible to swallow your tongue.

2. You should force something into the mouth of someone having a seizure. Absolutely not! This is a good way to chip teeth, puncture gums, or even break someone's jaw. The correct first aid is simple: Gently roll the person on one side and put something soft under his/her head to protect him/her from getting injured.

3. You should restrain someone having a seizure. Never use restraint! The seizure will run its course and you cannot stop it.

4. Epilepsy is contagious. You simply can't catch epilepsy from another person.

5. Only kids get epilepsy. Epilepsy happens to people over the age of 65 almost as often as it does to children aged ten and under. Seizures in elderly people are often the after-effect of other health problems like stroke and heart disease.

6. People with epilepsy are unemployable. People with epilepsy have the same range of abilities and intelligence as the rest of the population. While a small percentage have such severe seizures that they are not able to work; the majority of people with epilepsy are not only able and keen to work, but also enjoy successful, productive and challenging careers.

7. People with epilepsy shouldn't be in jobs of responsibility and stress. People with epilepsy are found in all walks of life and at all levels in business, government, the arts and professions. We are not always aware of them because many people (even today) do not talk about having epilepsy because they fear discrimination and stigmatization which is all too common.

8. Epilepsy is rare and there aren't many people who have it. In South Africa, a minimum of one in every hundred people have epilepsy. Many people do

not only have epilepsy, but might be multiply disabled, i.e. where two or more disabilities occur together, such as intellectual disabilities, autism, psychiatric disorders, etc..

9. You can't tell what a person might do during a seizure.

Seizures are commonly characterized in each individual. In other words, the person is likely to do much the same thing during each episode. His/her behavior may be inappropriate for the time and place but it is unlikely to cause harm to anyone.

10. People with epilepsy are physically limited in what they can do.

In most cases epilepsy is not a barrier to physical achievement. We only have to think about Jonty Rhodes to bust this myth. He revolutionized fielding in cricket internationally through his physical abilities.

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!

Please see the article on day one for:

- The right to correct information

Please see the article on day two for:

- Children with epilepsy have the right to quality education

Please see the article on day three for:

- The right to quality medical treatment

OUR NATIONAL CONTACT NUMBER 0860374537

[\[back to top\]](#)

---

Visit our website or to contact any of our Branches or National Office.

Website: [www.epilepsy.org.za](http://www.epilepsy.org.za)

**EPILEPSY SOUTH AFRICA – National Office, Cape Town**

PO Box 73  
OBSERVATORY  
7935

Tel: (021) 447-3014

[info@epilepsy.org.za](mailto:info@epilepsy.org.za)

**EPILEPSY SOUTH AFRICA**

South Cape/Karoo

PO Box 107

KNYSNA

6570

**Tel: (044) 382-2155**

[southcape@epilepsy.org.za](mailto:southcape@epilepsy.org.za)

**EPILEPSY SOUTH AFRICA**

Western Cape

PO Box 24573,

LANDSDOWNE,

7779

**Tel: (021) 703-9420**

[wcape@epilepsy.org.za](mailto:wcape@epilepsy.org.za)

**EPILEPSY SOUTH AFRICA**

Mpumalanga / Limpopo

PO Box 55,

DULLSTROOM,

1110

**Tel: (013) 254-0161/2/3**

[mpumalanga@epilepsy.org.za](mailto:mpumalanga@epilepsy.org.za)

**EPILEPSY SOUTH AFRICA**

Gauteng Branch

Regional office

PO Box 1070

SPRINGS

1560

**Tel: (011) 816-2040/57**

[gauteng@epilepsy.org.za](mailto:gauteng@epilepsy.org.za)

**EPILEPSY SOUTH AFRICA Free**

State & North West

Branch

PO Box 167

PARYS

9585

**Tel: (056) 811-5959**

[freestate@epilepsy.org.za](mailto:freestate@epilepsy.org.za)

**EPILEPSY SOUTH AFRICA**

Kwa Zulu Natal Midlands

Branch

PO Box 2165

PIETERMARITZBURG

3200

**Tel: (033) 394-1041/8**

[kzn@epilepsy.org.za](mailto:kzn@epilepsy.org.za)

PLEASE CONTACT 0860 EPILEPSY (0860 374537)

TO GET IN CONTACT WITH YOUR CLOSEST BRANCH OF EPILEPSY SOUTH AFRICA

This is the electronic newsletter of Epilepsy South Africa, compiled by the National Office.

[Visit our Website](#)

[Unsubscribe from our newsletter](#)