

## Epilepsy

### Introduction

Epilepsy affects approximately 3% of all Australians. It is a disorder which takes the form of recurring seizures. Seizures are **sudden uncontrolled episodes of electrochemical activity in the brain**. Brain cells usually communicate with each other in a coordinated way to control our movements and consciousness. During a seizure this communication is temporarily disturbed.

**There are many different types of seizures. Seizures may appear as any of the following:**

- confusion and disorientation
- unusual, sudden body movements such as stiffening and jerking
- a convulsion with total loss of consciousness
- temporarily altered behaviour
- staring and blinking; a frightened look or lack of response
- a strange feeling or unusual taste; lip smacking or chewing
- walking around without a purpose; fiddling with clothes/objects nearby

Although you cannot stop a seizure, you can assist the person to make a quick and safe recovery by staying with them and reassuring them when the seizure has finished.

**Refer to Basic First-Aid for Seizures at the end of this fact sheet.**

### Impact on study

Students who suffer from Epilepsy may

- have seizures in class
- have difficulty concentrating and miss some of what is delivered in class
- require extra time for assignment completion or during examination
- be unable to persist with a task for very long (without rest breaks); experience fatigue
- miss classes due to illness or medical appointments

### What is helpful:

- provide written material ahead of time
- undertake flexi-mode study options to complete work and prevent overloading
- allow for appointments out of class to catch up on missed work
- permission to leave class to eat/drink, take medication, or rest
- extensions for assignments
- alternative course tasks or assessments
- additional time for exams
- communicate directly with the student about their condition and their needs

### Basic First Aid for Seizures:

- Contact a designated [Institute First Aider](#)
- Remain with the student to protect and reassure
- Do not restrain
- Put the person in the recovery position
- Note the time and length of the seizure
- Remove all dangerous objects
- DO NOT put anything in the person's mouth
- **Get immediate medical assistance (ring 000 for an ambulance) if:**
  - if the person remains unconscious
  - the seizure lasts for greater than five minutes
  - if it is possibly the first seizure and/or if you are unsure about the situation

### Links:

Epilepsy Foundation [www.epinet.org.au](http://www.epinet.org.au)