

Information leaflet on dealing with epileptic seizures

– Information on cases of urgency: Page 2 -

Epilepsy – What is it about?

Epilepsy is an umbrella term for certain disorders of the nervous system. These are also known as seizure disorders, for they are primarily characterised by so-called epileptic seizures.

Epilepsy is a complex disorder, an organic disease that may interact with the patient's personality or their way of life. Due to traditional cultural imagery that tends to misrepresent epilepsy, there are a great deal of misunderstandings and erroneous beliefs surrounding the condition, which contribute to the exclusion of those affected and to major insecurities as to what one should do in case a seizure occurs. This leaflet is to provide concise information on adequate support and behavior in case a seizure occurs in a university setting. For details on the disorder, its diagnosis and treatment, please refer to specialised sources, e.g. die [Website of "Epilepsie-Vereinigung"](https://www.epilepsie-vereinigung.de/): <https://www.epilepsie-vereinigung.de/>. (German).

Concerning the impact of seizure disorders on academic life, basically the same principles as with other chronic diseases apply (cf. the "Leitfaden für Lehrende"). By way of reasonable accommodation ("Nachteilsausgleich") modifications to the schedule of study and an extension of time-frames or deadlines should be considered.

A Seizure– Is it an emergency?

Not every seizure requires urgent medical attention; there may be no need to call an ambulance at all. It is important to discern "huge" grand mal seizures from smaller, minor seizures. "Minor" seizures usually do not require medical attention and frequently go unnoticed by external observers. This type of seizure usually subsides within a view minutes without damage to the brain. As a rule, no assistance is required in such cases.

If you happen to observe a seizure that lasts for a longer period of time, try to estimate the seizure's duration. If a seizure lasts more than 5 minutes, call a doctor.

When to Call a Doctor – Important reasons:

- Duration of seizure: more than 5 minutes.
- The patient's face turns blue.
- The patient stops breathing / breath is interrupted.
- Convulsions reappear within one hour from the incident
- This seems to be the first seizure a person ever had.

Assistance during a seizure:

- **Act calmly:** Keep calm as far as possible. Try to lead the patient out of dangerous areas.
- **Assistance:** Remain with the patient. Stay until the patient has fully „come to“, all signs of disturbance and disorientation are gone. If the patients stays disturbed and disoriented for more than 30 minutes: call a doctor.
- **Prevent harm:** Prevent injuries. Prevent the patient from falling.
- **Make room:** Loosen restricting clothes or jewelry.

⊘ Caution: Please Do Not... – Risk of Injury: ⊘

- ⊘ Do not hold patients!
- ⊘ Do not take any objects away they may be claspig!
- ⊘ Do not put anything into their mouths or between their teeth.

As muscles are extremely tense during a seizure, attempts at the actions above are likely to harm the patient physically.

Assistance after a seizure:

- **Assistance:** Remain with the patient!
- **Calm:** Try to establish a calm, unexciting environment (few stimuli)!
- **First Aid:** Don't let the patient get too cold (hypothermia). Attend to injuries, if necessary!