

Safety at home

Epilepsy affects people differently. People who have their seizures controlled with medication may not face any particular risks to their safety.

If you have seizures, risks to your safety may depend on:

- the type of seizures you have;
- what happens to you during a seizure and how they affect you; and
- how you feel afterwards.

You can use this form as a template to help you to think about what the risks are to you because of your seizures. You can fill this in yourself, or, if you need help you could ask a friend, carer, or your healthcare professional (such as a GP or neurologist) to help you fill it in. It can help to involve other people so that they can tell you what they see happening to you when you have a seizure.

These are only suggestions and you may want to add your own ideas about risks and what would be helpful for you.

To help you to think about your seizures, and possible risks to your safety when you are out, you may want to use our additional templates, 'About your seizures' and 'Safety outside your home'.

[Visit epilepsysociety.org.uk/safety-and-risk-templates](https://www.epilepsysociety.org.uk/safety-and-risk-templates)

Further information about safety and risk is available on our website or by calling our helpline.

Your name

Address

.....

Phone

Date of birth

Emergency contact name

.....

Emergency contact address

.....

.....

Phone

GP's name

Surgery address

.....

Some people with epilepsy may not want to put safety measures in place, however it can be important to get a balance between making situations safer and freedom of choice.

Epilepsy Society Helpline
01494 601400
helpline@epilepsysociety.org.uk
Confidential, national call rate.
Information and emotional support.

Things to think about

Stairs

If your home has stairs you may want to consider whether there are any risks to your safety because of your seizures. For some people there is a high risk of injury from falling down the stairs during a seizure.

- Going up the stairs on your hands and knees, and coming down the stairs on your bottom can reduce the risk of injury if a seizure happens.
- If possible try to reduce the number of times you go up and down the stairs.
- Using hand rails can be helpful if you have difficulty with co-ordination after a seizure.
- You may want to think about living on one level.

Heaters, radiators and open fires

Some heating systems have an increased risk of injury, for example burns and scalds.

- Radiators can cause injuries if you fall on the sharp edge. Radiator covers can protect you against injury and burns. Using a large towel to cover the radiator can be an alternative.
- Using heaters that are secured to the wall or floor means you can't knock them over.
- Thermostatic controls can help to keep radiators at low temperature and reduce the risk of burns and scalds.
- Using furniture as a barrier, for example putting a sofa in front of a radiator, can protect you from a potential injury.
- Open fires and gas fires are best avoided.

Smoke and fire

The UK Fire Service recommends working smoke detectors and fire extinguishers for everyone.

- The fire service recommends a smoke alarm on every level and that batteries are checked and replaced regularly.
- Contact your local fire service for a free home safety visit. They can give fire safety advice and fit smoke alarms if you need them.

- Some smoke alarms can alert a nominated person or carer, or the fire service, as well as sounding an audible alarm.
- Some alarms can also be wired into the mains and linked to an external monitoring service. This may be useful if you are not likely to hear an alarm during a seizure.
- If you smoke, you may want to consider possible fire risks of smoking indoors which may increase if you have seizures.

Windows and doors

Some types of glass can fracture and break if someone falls against it during a seizure.

- Fitting toughened 'safety glass' means that the glass won't break if someone falls against it.
- Consider using safety glass film (which can be stuck to the glass). This can stop glass from splintering when it's broken.
- Using two locks on external doors can reduce the risk of wandering if you become confused during a seizure.
- Consider fitting rounded door handles that don't have sharp edges, as these can be less likely to cause an injury.
- Doors that open both ways, or outwards, can make access easier in an emergency. Concertina doors, or doors that slide sideways, may be a useful alternative if space is limited.

Cooking

- Microwaves can be safer than conventional ovens as they turn off automatically after the cooking time ends. This means that there is less chance of food burning or a fire starting if you leave it unattended.
- Electric steamers or slow cookers may reduce the risk of burns.
- Using rings or burners at the back means that you are less likely to knock pans off during a seizure.
- Turning saucepan handles to the side can help prevent pans being knocked off the cooker.
- Using a cooking basket inside a saucepan means you can lift the basket out after cooking and the hot water drains back into the pan.
- Grilling food rather than frying it can reduce the risk of a fire if you leave the cooker unattended.
- Using an induction hob or portable induction plate means that only the pan gets hot.

- Fitting a cooker guard around the front of the hob means that rings or burners may be harder to touch by accident.
- Using a low-level grill instead of an eye-level grill can help reduce the risk of injuring your face if you have a seizure.
- Drinks can be heated in a microwave.
- Cordless kettles that switch off automatically and have a lid that 'locks' shut can help prevent scalds. A kettle cradle or tipper helps you to pour hot water without lifting the kettle.
- Thermal mugs with lids can help to protect you if you spill a hot drink during a seizure.
- Using a trolley to transfer food from the cooker to the table means that you don't have to carry hot or heavy dishes.
- Using plastic or shatterproof crockery and containers can reduce the risk of injury from sharp edges if broken.
- Using an electric chopper can be helpful if you have concerns about using knives or you can use a peeler instead of a knife.
- Cordless irons that switch off automatically after a set time when not in use, and have no cable to trip over, can reduce the risk of burns if you have a seizure.
- A shower, preferably a walk-in shower, can be safer than a bath.
- If you choose to have a bath, or if there is no shower, running a shallow bath and putting cold water in first can help prevent scalds.
- Fitting thermostatically controlled taps means that the water will not get too hot if you have a seizure and fall into the bath.
- Having a bath or shower when there is someone else around means that they can help you if you have a seizure.
- Consider using an anti-slip bath mat and cushioning taps and edges.
- Using a shower curtain instead of a screen can make it easier for someone to help you if you have a seizure in the shower.
- A fitted shower seat may help reduce the risk of you falling and grab rails can help steady you.
- Leaving the door unlocked and using an 'engaged' sign means that you can use the bathroom in private.
- Having doors that open both ways, or outwards, can make it easier for other people to get to you if you have a seizure and need help.
- A listening monitor can help someone outside the room make sure you are ok.

Seizures during sleep

Some people have seizures when they are asleep (sometimes called asleep or nocturnal seizures).

- A low-level bed or mattress on the floor may lower the risk of injury.
- Padded bed sides are available to help prevent injuries or stop you falling out of bed. However, these need to be considered carefully, perhaps with professional advice, as it may be possible for your arms or legs to get trapped or injured.
- Some people who have asleep seizures have a bed alarm that detects when they have a seizure. Other types of alarm are designed to go off if you fall out of bed or if you wander around during a seizure.
- Some people who have asleep seizures use safety or 'anti-suffocation' pillows. However, there is no evidence that they prevent suffocation.

Bathing

Having a shower can be safer than having a bath because the water drains away. This can lower the risk of drowning if you have a seizure.

DIY

It can be helpful to think about the type and frequency of your seizures and the potential risk of each job. Perhaps someone else could do it.

- Using power tools that have a safety cut-out and batteries rather than mains power may be safer, as there is no cable to damage if you have a seizure while using them.
- Using a circuit breaker at the socket can help protect against the risk of electrocution.
- Using additional power sockets can be safer rather than extension cables or multi-point plugs.
- If you are in any doubt about doing a job yourself, you may want to talk to a professional such as an electrician or plumber.
- Using ladders carries the risk of falling.

Gardening

- Grass or bark chippings are a softer alternative to concrete or gravel and can reduce the risk of severe injuries if you fall.

- Plants, shrubs or rubber matting can be useful to cover hard surfaces.
- Artificial grass means there is no need to use a lawn mower.
- Using a petrol, or cordless, lawn mower means there is no chance of cutting through the cable.
- Some mowers stop automatically when the handle is released. If you do use an electric mower, a circuit breaker at the plug can help protect against electrocution.
- Think about securing your garden with a padlock on your gate if you become confused or wander about during your seizures.
- Replacing steps with ramps can reduce the risk of injury if seizures happen.
- If you have a pond, it may be possible to fit a pond safety grid just under the surface of the water. This can hold your weight if you fall on it, without spoiling the look of the pond.

Alarms, monitors and seizure alerting systems

- Some people find it reassuring to have an alarm, monitor, or seizure alerting system to get help if they have a seizure.
- There are different alarm systems available, suitable for different types of seizures.
- Some systems can be linked to a community alarm service, and are available through your local social services.
- Having a key safe means others can get in to help you.

Memory aids

- Drug wallets can help you to remember to take your medication.
- Using a seizure diary can help you keep track of when you have seizures.
- Setting reminders on your mobile phone can help you to remember to do everyday tasks or something that isn't part of your usual routine.

Visit epilepsysociety.org.uk/seizure-diaries and epilepsysociety.org.uk/memory

First aid

- You might want to keep a list of people to contact in case of an emergency and information about how they can help you if you have a seizure.
- Keeping a first aid box handy and telling friends or family where it is so they can help if you injure yourself during a seizure.

Visit epilepsysociety.org.uk/firstaid

For a printed copy of this information contact our helpline.

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