

MYTHS & MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT EPILEPSY

MYTH #1 YOU CAN SWALLOW YOUR TONGUE DURING A SEIZURE

It is physically impossible to swallow your tongue.

MYTH #2 YOU SHOULD FORCE SOMETHING INTO THE MOUTH OF SOMEONE HAVING A CONVULSIVE SEIZURE

Absolutely not! That's a good way to chip teeth, puncture gums, or even break someone's jaw. The correct first aid is simple. Just gently roll the person on one side and put something soft under his head to protect him from getting injured

MYTH #3 YOU SHOULD RESTRAIN SOMEONE HAVING A SEIZURE

Never use restraint! The seizure will run its course and you cannot stop it.

MYTH #4 EPILEPSY IS CONTAGIOUS

You simply can not catch epilepsy from another person.

MYTH #5 ONLY KIDS GET EPILEPSY

Epilepsy happens to people over age 65 almost as often as it does to children aged 10 & under. In fact, it can happen to anyone at any age. Seizures in the elderly are often the aftereffect of other health problems like stroke and heart disease.

MYTH #6 PEOPLE WITH EPILEPSY ARE DISABLED AND CAN'T WORK

People with the condition have the same range of abilities and intelligence as the rest of us. Some have severe seizures & cannot work; others are successful & productive in challenging careers.

MYTH #7 PEOPLE WITH EPILEPSY SHOULDN'T BE IN JOBS OF RESPONSIBILITY AND STRESS

People with seizure disorders are found in all walks of life & at all levels in business, government, the arts & the professions. We aren't always aware of them because many people, even today, do not talk about having epilepsy for fear of what others might think.

MYTH #8 WITH TODAY'S MEDICATION, EPILEPSY IS LARGELY A SOLVED PROBLEM.

Epilepsy is a chronic medical problem that for many people can be successfully treated. Unfortunately, treatment doesn't work for everyone & there's a critical need for more research.

MYTH #9 EPILEPSY IS RARE AND THERE AREN'T MANY PEOPLE WHO HAVE IT.

Over 2,700,000 in the U.S. have epilepsy. It is third most common neurological disorder after Alzheimer's & stroke—equal in prevalence to cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis & Parkinson's disease **combined**. Epilepsy can occur as a single condition, or may accompany other conditions affecting the brain, such as cerebral palsy, mental retardation, autism, Alzheimer's & traumatic brain injury.

MYTH #10 YOU CAN'T DIE FROM EPILEPSY

Epilepsy is still a very serious condition & individuals do die of it. An estimated 25,000 to 50,000 people each year will die of seizures and related causes, including status epilepticus (non-stop) seizures, sudden unexpected death in epilepsy (SUDEP), drowning and other accidents.

MYTH #11 YOU CAN'T TELL WHAT A PERSON MIGHT DO DURING A SEIZURE.

Seizures commonly take a characteristic form and the individual will do much the same thing during each episode. His behavior may be inappropriate for the time & place, but it is unlikely to cause harm to anyone.

MYTH #12 PEOPLE WITH EPILEPSY ARE PHYSICALLY LIMITED IN WHAT THEY CAN DO.

In most cases, epilepsy isn't a barrier to physical achievement, although some individuals are more severely affected & may be limited in what they can do. Professional sports players with epilepsy have included Greg Walker (Chicago White Sox-baseball), Bobby Jones (Denver Nuggets & Philadelphia '76ers-basketball), & Gary Howatt (New York Islander-hockey).