

WATER SMART® FACTS

Epilepsy and Water Safety



A Seizure in the Water

When an individual has a seizure in the pool, the lifeguard's two concerns are that the person will stop breathing & that s/he will be physically hurt. Although any seizure experienced in or near water could be dangerous or even fatal, it is the tonic clonic (formerly called grand mal) seizure that causes the most concern. For this reason a short description of what *could* occur if a swimmer experiences a tonic clonic seizure follows:

While in the *tonic* (rigid) phase the muscles contract, causing the body to lose its buoyancy and sink. When the *clonic* phase begins, the person's muscles contract & relax allowing the lungs to fill with water, causing the person to drown. *This can occur in a few seconds & in just a few inches of water*—whether a pool, lake, or bath.

BLUE, POLARIZED SUN GLASSES

Worn while outdoors will help prevent seizures caused by bright or flickering lights and sunlight reflected off the water.

IF YOU HAVE EPILEPSY

- **SWIM WITH A BUDDY**—In an area supervised by a Lifesaving Society trained lifeguard.
- **CHOOSE IT. USE IT. WEAR A LIFEJACKET**—It won't help if you don't wear it!
- **KEEP WATCH WITHIN ARMS REACH**—If you're not within arms reach of your child, you've gone too far. **Never leave children unsupervised around water!**
- **ADVISE THE LIFEGUARD OF YOUR EPILEPSY**—He or she will be much better prepared to assist if a seizure occurs.
- **PACE YOURSELF**—To avoid a seizure caused by hyperventilation.
- **IF BOATING**—Wear your lifejacket, don't go out alone, be aware of weather, drive at a safe speed, and don't use alcohol—it may trigger a seizure.

Whether in the water or on a boat, most water related incidents are preventable with a little preparation and common sense.

Play safe and BE WATER SMART!

The Lifesaving Society AB/NWT
www.lifesaving.org



The Epilepsy Association of Calgary
www.epilepsycalgary.com



Edmonton Epilepsy Association
www.edmontonepilepsy.org



Or Contact
Your physician or healthcare provider