

Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog

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Most seizures last just a few minutes and resolve on their own without the need for emergency medical care. However, seizure emergencies that can cause injury or brain damage do occasionally happen, especially in cases of severe or treatment-resistant epilepsy. In these situations, a group of drugs called seizure rescue medications can help quickly stop seizures. Making a seizure action plan for what to do when a seizure occurs — including how to use rescue medicines — may reduce the likelihood of a seizure causing irreversible damage.

What Are Seizure Rescue Medications?

Seizure rescue therapies include fast-acting medications. They are designed to be easy to use and to administer by people who are not trained health care professionals, such as a caregiver or a family member. These medications do not replace your daily antiepileptic drugs. Rather, they are used as needed during seizures that are prolonged, clustered, or different from your typical seizure type.

Someone having an active seizure may not be able to swallow a pill, so rescue treatments come in a variety of forms including dissolving tablets, nasal sprays, and rectal gels. Your health care provider should ensure you understand how and when to use the rescue medicine.

Learn more about different types of seizure rescue medications and therapies.

What Is a Seizure Action Plan?

A seizure action plan includes information about your seizure history and a list of actions to take if you have a seizure. SAPs give bystanders, caregivers, or health care workers the information they need to help a person during a seizure.

Your SAP should include the following:

- Basic seizure first-aid instructions
- Your seizure triggers
- Details about your typical seizures
- Emergency contact information
- Insurance information
- A list of your health care providers and preferred hospital
- Instructions for when and how to give your seizure rescue medications
- A list of all your medications for epilepsy

Seizure action plans should be specific to the place they are meant to be used — such as your school or workplace. They should consider the resources available there.

Epilepsy Foundation has easy-to-fill-out forms to help you make your own seizure action plan. The nonprofit also offers seizure first-aid training.

Seizure Action Plans for Children in School

In a study of families with children living with epilepsy, most (87 percent) had been prescribed a rescue drug as part of their epilepsy treatment plan. But only 61 percent of these families had undergone training on how to use it, and just 31 percent knew when to administer it. Although not all children with epilepsy will need rescue therapy, they are more likely to be safe if there is a rescue drug accessible and the people around them are prepared to administer it.

Pediatric (childhood) epilepsy is managed differently than seizures in adults. Certain rescue medications are approved for children ages 6 and older; others are approved for children aged 12 years and older. Parents and caregivers need to plan for the possibility of a seizure happening at school. Kids with epilepsy should have a school-specific seizure action plan in addition to their plan for home. The school should be kept informed and updated when any treatment plans change. Parents and guardians should work with the school to ensure it is equipped and qualified to implement the SAP.

School nurses, teachers, support staff, and even other students play a huge role in successfully putting an SAP into action in the school setting. At least one school staff member — though ideally, many more — should receive proper epilepsy education and seizure first-aid training. Evidence suggests school nurses who have received seizure-preparedness training, including when and how to administer a rescue medication, feel more confident about their ability to deliver seizure first aid.

Several states have passed Seizure Safe Schools legislation, which includes mandatory training and education of school personnel and students on seizure first aid. These laws also ensure access to rescue medicines at school for students who have them prescribed.

Seizure Action Plans for People in College

Attending college or university is often the first time adults living with epilepsy are completely in charge of their own epilepsy care. Making a college-specific seizure action plan is important. Ideally, you should talk to at least one trusted person, such as a roommate or resident advisor, about your epilepsy and SAP.

Your seizure action plan for college may include some seizure triggers more specific to this environment. College students often experience stress and sleep deprivation, both of which are common triggers. If you drink alcohol, be mindful that it can interact with AEDs, increasing the likelihood of having a seizure for a person with epilepsy.

It is entirely up to you whom you tell about your epilepsy and when. Remember, though, that having a college-specific SAP that includes information about your rescue medicine can make it easier to educate others about what to do if you have a seizure.

Learn more about telling others about your epilepsy diagnosis.

Seizure Action Plans for People at Work

Being prepared for a seizure at work is an important part of managing one's epilepsy. In addition to including instructions for a seizure rescue medication, a work-specific SAP may include your

usual recovery time and needs. You should provide answers to these questions in your workplace SAP:

- Do you usually recover quickly and get back to work?
- Do you need a place to briefly rest after a seizure, or do you need to go home to recover?
- If you need to go home, how will you get there and who will take you?

Making an SAP for work will require telling people at your place of employment about your neurological condition. Although 44 percent of adults with active epilepsy and recent seizures are considered to have a disability, people with seizures can and do have fulfilling careers in a diversity of industries.

In the U.S., people with certain health conditions, including epilepsy, are protected from workplace discrimination by the Americans With Disabilities Act. In some cases, employers are required to make adjustments to make working with epilepsy easier for you. These are called reasonable accommodations.

For various reasons, not everyone feels comfortable disclosing their epilepsy to their employer. Before you decide to disclose your seizure status at work, familiarize yourself with your employee rights and laws in your jurisdiction. You should also take into consideration the workplace culture and policies, your role, and your relationship with your supervisor. Only disclose your seizure status if and when you are comfortable doing so.

Seizure Action Plans for Travel

Travel always requires preparation and planning. If you have epilepsy, you'll likely need to plan your trip with seizure safety in mind, especially if you are traveling alone.

In advance of your trip:

- Adjust and update your SAP to reflect your travel plans. Make sure you have identified an emergency contact and they are informed about your travel plans.
- Pack your medications, your SAP, and other vital epilepsy gear in both your checked suitcase and carry on in case there are any luggage issues on the way.
- If you are traveling with others, inform them about your rescue meds. If appropriate, help make them comfortable with the process and protocol surrounding rescue drug use.
- Ensure your travel companion is prepared to adapt seizure first aid for different vacation scenarios, e.g., on an airplane or on a boat.

During your trip keep your SAP on or near you and easily accessible for those around you, so they know what to do if you have a seizure.

Editor's Note: The Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog will be distributed and posted weekly.
Always remember – **CARPE DIEM – SEIZE THE DAY!**

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