

## Epilepsy and communication

This brief factsheet highlights some of the main impacts epilepsy may have on communication. The information has been provided by Epilepsy Connections.

It identifies general practical action you can take to remove barriers to participation that people with autism may face. Remember every person is different.

There are many different seizure types, all of which affect people in different ways.

- A person having an absence seizure looks blank for a few seconds and may not respond when spoken to or realise they have had a seizure. This type of seizure can happen repeatedly and may be mistaken for daydreaming.
- In a simple partial seizure the person may experience unusual sensations and/or movement in one part of the body, e.g. twitching.
- In a complex partial seizure awareness is disturbed or lost and the person may experience strange feelings. They may be unaware of their surroundings, be unable to respond when spoken to and their behaviour may appear unusual.
- In tonic-clonic seizures the person stiffens, then jerks, loses consciousness, convulses and may fall. Incontinence may happen.

Other difficulties:

- Having a seizure can be mistaken for other conditions, e.g. drug/alcohol related behaviour.
- Following a seizure some people may feel sleepy, have a headache or take a few days to feel back to normal.
- Memory and concentration problems.
- Depression, anxiety or a lack of self-confidence can cause stress, which in turn can bring on a seizure.

### Key actions

To enable a person with epilepsy to engage more fully:

- make sure meetings are held somewhere they feel comfortable and at a time when they will not be rushed to get there, e.g. appointments first thing in the morning can put pressure on the person
- when you make an appointment to meet someone with epilepsy, make sure you write to confirm the time and place as poor memory can be a big issue
- bear in mind that epilepsy can occur with other conditions and can also be linked to learning disability
- be patient!

### Further information:

Epilepsy Connections ([www.epilepsyconnections.org.uk](http://www.epilepsyconnections.org.uk))