

Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a condition caused by recurrent or chronic seizures. Seizures, also called 'fits' or 'blackouts', are caused by abnormal, excessive electric discharges of nerves in the brain. Seizures are not caused by witchcraft or bad luck and are not contagious.

If a child's epilepsy is not managed it can interfere with their schoolwork, physical activity and social connections.

Managing a seizure:

- Do not move the child, unless they are in a dangerous position, e.g., next to a fire
- Create a clear space around the child
- Protect the child's head, e.g., place a pillow or something soft under their head
- DO NOT slap the child or give them food or drink or put anything into their mouth
- DO NOT restrain the child or try to stop the jerking
- After the jerking movements have stopped, make sure the child is breathing normally
- Gently roll the child onto their side to keep the airway clear. Stay with the child and calmly talk to them
- If convulsions last longer than 5 minutes, call an ambulance or take the child quickly to a doctor.

Signs of epilepsy are different depending on the type of seizure. Some signs are:

- Loss of consciousness (for a few seconds to a few minutes)
- Uncontrollable body movement (jerking)
- Sudden loss of concentration or attention; periods of staring or temporary confusion
- Eyelids flickering, eyes drifting upwards.

Medication (anti-epileptic drugs) can substantially reduce the occurrence of seizures, and in many people completely prevent them. Medication is available in Fiji and needs to be taken regularly.

Children with epilepsy may feel frightened or embarrassed and may not understand what is happening. Support them during the seizure and reassure them that everything okay afterwards.

To identify the triggers of a child's seizures and to limit recurrence, record information about the seizure (what the person was doing, when it occurred and the duration of seizure). Regular follow up clinics are essential in managing epilepsy.

"All schools shall promote fair and equitable access to education for all learners with disabilities regardless of their gender, age, social status, economic background, geographical location, race, ethnicity, religious background, sexual orientation and gender identity, or intersections between these factors."

(MoE, Special and Inclusive Education Policy)

"Every person has the right to early childhood education, primary and secondary education and further education."

(Fiji Constitution)

Who can help? Your nearest health centre, the hospital in your division and your community health worker (if applicable). For teaching strategies, reference **A Teachers Guide to Disability - Inclusive Education in Fiji**.

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Please note that this document is for informational/education purposes only and does not replace medical advice.



Ministry of Education

