

Disability fact sheet

EPILEPSY

Produced as part of the *Toolkit for Disability-Inclusive Education - Fiji*

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Every person has the right to early childhood education, primary and secondary education and further education (Fiji Constitution)

All children should be given the opportunity to learn together wherever possible, regardless of difficulties, disabilities or differences (Fiji Ministry of Education Policy on Special and Inclusive Education)

Epilepsy is a common health condition, where seizures occur, caused by abnormal, excessive electric discharges of nerves in the brain. Other terms you may have heard are 'fits' or 'blackouts'. Epilepsy is not caused by witchcraft or bad luck and is not contagious. A seizure may involve uncontrollable body movement and losing consciousness for a few seconds to a few minutes. Some people have seizures that are far less obvious.

Managing a seizure:

- *Do not move the child, unless they are in a dangerous situation e.g. close to a fire.*
- *Create a clear space around the child.*
- *Protect the child's head, eg. place pillow under 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
- Uncontrollable body movement (jerking)
- Sudden loss of concentration or attention; periods of staring
- Eyelids flickering, eyes drifting upwards

Medication (anti-epileptic drugs) can be used to help 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 afterwards.

It is very important that your child is assessed and treated by doctors. Epilepsy is a chronic condition which requires life-long treatment.

Who can help?

CWM Hospital children's department, district hospitals, local health centre, Community Rehabilitation Assistants, Teachers.