Mental Health and Learning Disabilities

Epilepsy
What is Epilepsy?

A fit occurs when there is an abnormal activity in the brain.

When fits occur many times, it is called Epilepsy.

Fits can be of several different types.

What happens in a fit?

This depends on the type of fit.

A person having a fit may:
Pass out
Have jerks in hands, legs and other muscles in the body
Pass water or open bowels
Have odd sensations such as odd smells, odd feelings
Behave strangely for a few minutes
Bite tongue
Not remember having a fit
What Causes Epilepsy?

• Some genetic disorders
• Infections of the brain
• Head injury
• Tumour in the brain
• Brain damage
• The cause may not be known in some people

• If you want to know more about it, you can speak to your Psychiatrist or Community Nurse.

How is epilepsy diagnosed?

You may be referred to a Neurologist. He is a doctor who is an expert in epilepsy.

You may need a scan of your brain.

An EEG can be done which records the activity in your brain.

You may need blood tests.
What is the Treatment?

• Medication called anti-epileptics are used to control fits.

• Sometimes more than one anti-epileptic may be needed.

• If the fits last for long then rescue medication such as Diazepam can be used.

• You may need to the hospital.

• Brain surgery may also be an option in some people.

• A procedure called Vagal Nerve Stimulation can also be used.

What else can you do?

• Do not miss your tablets

• Try and avoid being stressed

• Tell your doctor if you are taking other medications

• Get a good nights rest

• Maintain a seizure diary

• You could wear a badge/bracelet which will help people to know that you have epilepsy.
Sudden unexplained death can rarely happen in people who have Epilepsy.

It may happen if a person with epilepsy has:

- A lot of major fits at night
- Missed tablets
- Had too much Alcohol
- Younger age
- Male gender
- No one around when they have a major fit
- Fits for many years

Risk of SUDEP can be reduced by:

- Taking medication regularly
- Monitoring of seizures at night e.g. having an epilepsy alarm
- Avoiding alcohol
- Eating healthy
- Regular exercise
- Getting a good night rest
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