



People with epilepsy enjoy all varieties of sporting activities, and with some sensible strategies swimming can be one of them. Here are some guidelines for staying safe.

Seizures and swimming

Before swimming it is important to seek the advice of the doctor although generally seizures during exercise are rare. Most sporting activities are safe as long as overexertion, dehydration and hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar) are avoided.

People with poorly controlled seizures should never swim alone.

These safety strategies can help:

- ❖ Ensure there is always a **swimming companion** who:
 - Is aware of the person's seizures and what they look like.
 - Is able to maintain frequent eye contact.
 - Stays close at all times.
 - Is a strong swimmer.
 - Knows what to do if a seizure occurs, in or out of the water.
- ❖ **Inform the lifeguard** on duty of the potential risk of a seizure occurring.
- ❖ If you have had brain surgery, check with your doctor before diving.
- ❖ **A brightly coloured costume or cap** can ensure quick and easy identification. **Wearing tinted goggles or sunglasses** may reduce seizures if flickering or reflective light is a seizure trigger.
- ❖ **Avoid resting on the edge** of a body of water and **avoid swimming** when fatigued, feeling unwell, if medication has been missed or the warning signs of a seizure are being experienced.
- ❖ **Avoid hypoventilation** (e.g. swimming underwater for long periods of time) if this has been identified as a trigger for seizures.

If people with poorly controlled epilepsy want to swim it's advisable to:

- ❖ Wear a **safety vest** that keeps their head above water.
- ❖ **Be accompanied by two people**, one in the pool and one out of the pool.
- ❖ Keep the pool companion within arm's reach and watch at all times.

If a seizure occurs in the water...

While in the water:

- ❖ **Support the person's head** so their face is out of the water.
- ❖ **Tilt their head back** to ensure a clear airway.
- ❖ **If in pool (still water)** remove the person from the water when the jerking stops. *Note: In the rare circumstance the jerking does not stop, seek assistance from others if possible, and remove the person from the water at the shallowest end of the pool.*
- ❖ **If in surf (moving water)** remove the person from the water immediately.
- ❖ **Seek assistance** if necessary.

Once out of the water:

- ⚡ **Place the person on their side.**
- ⚡ **Check to see if they are breathing.**
- ⚡ If they are not breathing, **begin resuscitation only after jerking stops.**
- ⚡ **Call an ambulance immediately** even if the person is breathing as they may have inhaled water.

When the ambulance arrives:

You may be asked to give information regarding:

- ⚡ How long the seizure lasted
- ⚡ What happened during the seizure
- ⚡ How many seizures occurred
- ⚡ Level of awareness of the person
- ⚡ Any breathing difficulties
- ⚡ If you think they inhaled water
- ⚡ Any injuries noticed

This information is given to provide accurate, general information about epilepsy. Medical information and knowledge changes rapidly and you should consult your doctor for more detailed information. This is not medical advice and you should not make any medication or treatment changes without consulting your doctor.