

Myths & Facts

Myth: You should put a spoon, pencil, wallet or other object in the mouth during a seizure.

Fact: You should never put anything in a person's mouth while he or she is having a seizure. Doing so can cause injury to the teeth or gums. It is not true that you can swallow your tongue during a seizure.

Myth: Epilepsy is contagious.

Fact: You cannot catch epilepsy from or give it to someone else.

Myth: Seizures are completely uncontrollable.

Fact: Through surgery, medication, diet or a combination of these, people with epilepsy can achieve full or partial control of seizures in about 85 percent of the cases.

Myth: Epilepsy has a spiritual—not a physical cause.

Fact: Epilepsy is a medical condition and seizures are the outward sign. Seizures are caused by brief disturbances in the brain's electrical activity. Epilepsy is not a curse.

Fact

An estimated 25,000 African Americans are diagnosed with a new case of epilepsy each year in the United States.

get the facts...
know the difference!

To learn more about epilepsy, visit

www.epilepsy.com

or call **1-800-332-1000**

to talk directly to one of our representatives who can answer any questions you may have, and help you get referrals to national and local resources.



This publication is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of a financial assistance award totaling \$1,500 with 100 percent funded by CDC/HHS. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, CDC/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

Get the facts! Epilepsy in the African American Community





Did you know?

- Approximately 1.2% of the total US population have epilepsy. This means 3.4 million people with epilepsy nationwide: 3 million adults and 470,000 children
- Nearly 450,000 of African American (non-Hispanic) adults, 18 years and older, have active epilepsy
- Nearly 130,000 African American (non-Hispanic) children, under 18 years old, are living with epilepsy
- More than 575,000 total African Americans with active epilepsy in the US
- According to the CDC, males and non-Hispanic Blacks have the highest death rates with epilepsy
- Depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation are more likely for adults living with epilepsy



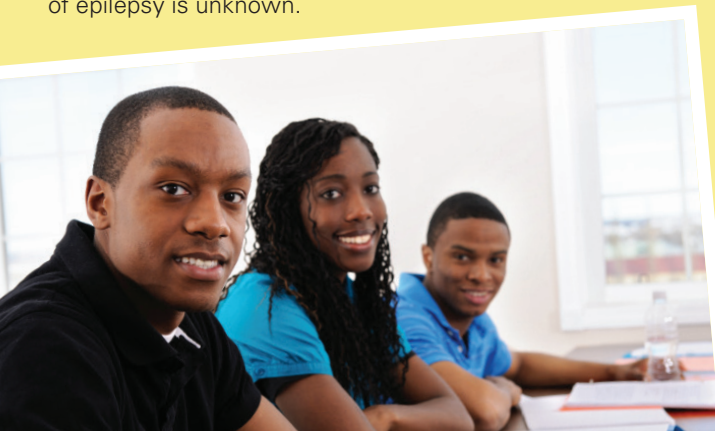
What is epilepsy?

Epilepsy is a neurological condition. A seizure is a symptom of epilepsy. A diagnosis of epilepsy is generally given after a person experiences two or more unprovoked seizures (or reflex) occurring more than 24 hours apart. Everyone's brain has the potential to seize, however, epilepsy is more likely to occur in children and older adults

A seizure occurs when the electrical signals in the brain are overloaded by an abnormal amount of electrical activity. This may cause:

- Confusion
- Hallucinations
- Strong emotions
- Muscle contractions
- Loss of consciousness

Known causes of epilepsy include head injuries, stroke, brain tumors, poisoning, problems in brain development before birth, and serious infections such as encephalitis or meningitis. However, more than half the time, the cause of epilepsy is unknown.



African Americans are more likely to be diagnosed with epilepsy than Caucasians. For many African Americans with epilepsy, access to appropriate care is challenging. The fear, misconceptions and stigma associated with epilepsy create barriers to living productive lives. Education is the key to understanding that epilepsy doesn't define an individual, it is a chronic medical condition that in most cases can be controlled with appropriate care.

The Multicultural Outreach Program at the Epilepsy Foundation focuses on:

- educating family and caregivers on seizure recognition and treatment options
- increasing the awareness of the prevalence of epilepsy among multicultural and underserved communities
- promoting inclusion, improving lives, and removing stigma

The Epilepsy Foundation recognizes how important targeted and culturally relevant outreach to the African American community is to improve the quality of life for those who are living with epilepsy. To expand the scope and reach of this program, the Foundation has established partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), the National Medical Association, the National Association of State Offices of Minority Health, and more.

Visit www.epilepsy.com/african-american for more information, articles, personal stories and resources.

What is Seizure First Aid?

- ▶ **STAY** with the person until they are awake and alert after the seizure
 - ✓ Time the seizure
 - ✓ Remain calm
 - ✓ Check for medical ID
- ▶ Keep the person **SAFE**.
 - ✓ Move or guide away from harm
- ▶ Turn the person onto their **SIDE** if they are not awake and aware
 - ✓ Keep airway clear
 - ✓ Loosen tight clothing around neck
 - ✓ Put something small and soft under the head

Call **911** if...

- ▶ Seizure lasts longer than 5 minutes
- ▶ Person does not return to their usual state
- ▶ Person is injured, pregnant, or sick
- ▶ Repeated seizures
- ▶ First time seizure
- ▶ Difficulty breathing
- ▶ Seizure occurs in water

Do **NOT**

- ✗ Do **NOT** restrain
- ✗ Do **NOT** put any objects in their mouth
 - ✓ Rescue medicines can be given if prescribed by a health care professional

Learn more and register for training:

epilepsy.com/firstaid