



Supporting employees and candidates with epilepsy

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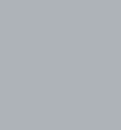
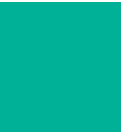


In this guide:

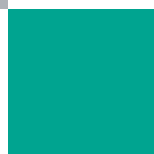
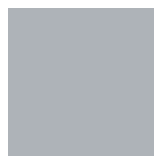
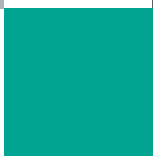
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Making adjustments – top tips





Introduction



This guide aims to give a general introduction to how epilepsy might impact someone at work and provide good practice tips on how to support them.

Diagnosis, treatment and cultural perceptions of epilepsy may vary between countries. Similarly, legal requirements will also differ: in some countries, epilepsy may not be legally recognised as a disability whereas in other countries, people with epilepsy may be protected by local legislation.

Ensuring that you support your candidates and employees with epilepsy will help you create a more diverse workforce, it's often the case that when a line manager is confident managing a person with a disability or long-term condition, they become more effective managers for all employees.

Language

Talking about epilepsy

Language can be important in creating an open and inclusive workplace for people who have epilepsy.

In this guide we use the term 'epilepsy' as it is widely understood. If in doubt, use the language that the individual uses to describe themselves and avoid placing 'labels' on employees.

Talking about disability

In this guide, we use the term 'disabilities' as used by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD)[1] ratified by over 175 countries. The UN CRPD Article 1 provides a definition for 'persons with disabilities':

“Persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.”

In practice, this could include people with a wide range of impairments or conditions such as dyslexia, cancer, diabetes or epilepsy, to name just a few.

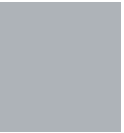
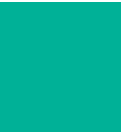
Talking about adjustments

Adjustments (in some countries referred to as 'accommodations') remove or reduce the effect of the barriers experienced by candidates and employees with disabilities.

Examples of adjustments might include providing a ramp as an alternative to stairs or an electronic version of paper document so that an employee with a visual impairment can use screen reader software to access the information. Working hours and locations can be made flexible, and managers can agree different ways to communicate with their employees e.g. over the phone, via email, face-to-face or in writing.

These are small changes that can remove barriers that stop someone from doing their job and can support good performance. In this guide, we refer to these types of changes as 'adjustments'.

[1] United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities: [un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html)



What is epilepsy?



Epilepsy is a term used to describe the tendency a person has in experiencing 'seizures' that originate in the brain.

Seizures occur when there is a momentary disturbance in the electrochemical activity of the brain, causing a temporary disruption to the way the brain works. A seizure will generally last no more than a few seconds or minutes, after which the brain cells will return to their normal state.

Epileptic seizures can take many forms, since the brain is responsible for such a wide range of functions including: personality, mood, memory, sensations movement and consciousness.

Todd's paralysis

After a seizure, some people will be unable to move all or part of their body. This is called Todd's paresis or Todd's paralysis. This can last from a few minutes up to several days, before going away.

Photosensitive epilepsy

Photosensitive epilepsy is a rare form of epilepsy in which seizures can be triggered by flickering or flashing light, either natural or artificial or by certain geometric shapes and patterns.

What to do if a seizure happens

The employee with epilepsy should be asked to advise you if they have any requirements and if they carry a medical alert card or bracelet.

The key action points when someone loses consciousness when experiencing a seizure are simple first aid procedures^[2]:

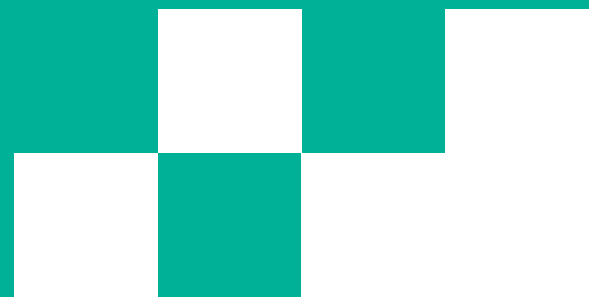
- Do not try to move the person, unless they are in a dangerous place, e.g. at the top of a flight of stairs or in a road.
- Do not attempt to restrict or restrain the convulsive movements.
- Do not try to wake them.
- Do not place any objects in their mouth.
- Move any objects that may cause injury.
- Loosen any tight clothing around their neck, if possible.
- Cushion their head.

Once the seizure is over, place the person in the recovery position and stay with them until they recover. When the person regains consciousness, they may be confused and may need to be reassured or helped to a quiet room to recover.

[2] epilepsy.org.uk/info/firstaid/what-to-do
redcross.org.uk/first-aid/learn-first-aid/seizures
sja.org.uk/sja/first-aid-advice/illnesses-and-conditions/seizures-fits-in-adults.aspx

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