

Pediatric Epilepsy

Water Safety for Children with Epilepsy

Drowning is the leading cause of unintentional injury-related deaths among children 1 to 14 years of age. Children with epilepsy are at greater risk for drowning than other children. And unlike adults, children usually drown quickly and quietly and can do so in as little as one inch of water. While there can't be a universal rule applicable to every possible situation and person, taking reasonable precautions or restrictions can help minimize the risk of serious injury.

Bath Safety

- Supervise and maintain "reach" distance for any child during tub bathing.
- When your child wants to bathe alone, teach them to shower using a handheld sprayer, no water in the tub, and the drain open.
- Routinely check and maintain that the bathroom drain works properly.
- Never close and lock the door; hang an "Occupied" sign on the outside of the bathroom door.
- Apply nonskid strips to your tub or shower.
- Use a shower chair instead of standing.

Swimming Safety

- A child with epilepsy should never swim unsupervised.
- Inform the lifeguard or safety personnel of your child's seizures.
- Make sure there is an adult present who can swim well enough to help your child if he or she seizes.
- Have your child swim with a brightly colored approved life jacket.
- Never dive into a river, lake or ocean.

Seizure in the Water

- Support the child's head and keep it out of the water.
- Assist the child to solid land as soon as possible and turn the person on one side.
- Make sure the airway is clear and breathing is not obstructed.
- Call for the lifeguard or trained personnel to check your child's airway and breathing.
- Seek emergency medical treatment if there is any possibility that water has been swallowed or breathed into the lungs.

Despite the above precautions, people with epilepsy should be encouraged to lead as normal a life as possible. Using common sense, there is no reason that people with epilepsy cannot participate fully in the vast majority of activities that life offers.

If you have any additional safety questions or concerns, please contact your epilepsy specialist.

There's only one Rainbow.

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To make an appointment with a pediatric epilepsy expert, call 216-844-5437 or visit RainbowBabies.org.