

## March 26 is Purple Day for Epilepsy

Throughout March, Epilepsy Australia is urging people around the country to end the stigma and discrimination of epilepsy and 'GO PURPLE', the international colour for epilepsy.

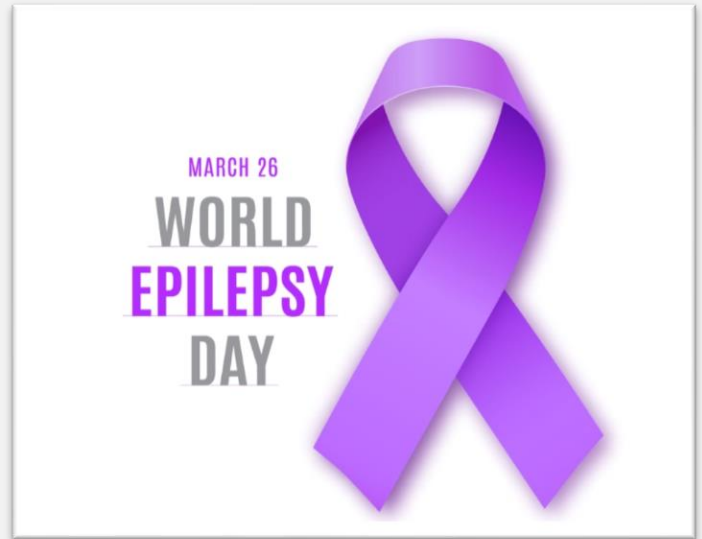
### What is Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a common brain disorder which takes the form of recurring seizures. It can develop at any age, regardless of gender or ethnicity. In Australia approximately 250,000 people live with epilepsy and one in 25 people will have epilepsy at some point in their life.

The over 55 years age group is now being recognised as being the most vulnerable group. This rapidly growing demographic group is subject to the kinds of cerebrovascular, respiratory and cardiac events that can lead to epileptic seizures.

### What is a seizure?

Our every thought, feeling or action is controlled by brain cells that communicate with each other through regular electrical impulses. These impulses travel along the network of nerve cells, called neurons, in the brain and throughout the body via chemical messengers called neurotransmitters. A seizure occurs when the brains nerve cells misfire and generate sudden, uncontrolled burst of electrical activity in the brain. The orderly communication between nerve cells becomes scrambled and our thoughts, feelings or movements become momentarily confused or uncontrolled.



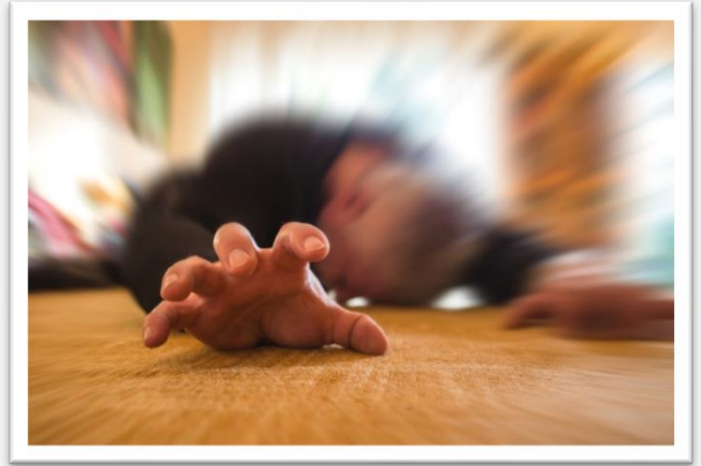
Seizures can be subtle causing momentary lapses of consciousness, or conspicuous causing sudden loss of body control. Seizures are episodic and unpredictable, and may occur as frequently as every day, or just occasionally in a lifetime.

While seizures can be frightening, in most instances they stop without intervention. Once the seizure is over the person gradually regains control and re-orientates themselves to their surroundings, generally without any ill effects. Approximately 70% of people diagnosed with epilepsy will have their seizures controlled with medication.

### Purple Day

Purple Day aims to encourage people to talk about epilepsy and to remind those who live with seizures, that they are not alone.

Founded in 2008 by a young Canadian girl called Cassidy Megan, it has since become a global campaign dedicated to increasing epilepsy awareness worldwide.



Please print and display the attached Seizure First Aid poster from [Epilepsy Australia](http://www.epilepsyaustralia.net)

### References:

<http://www.epilepsyaustralia.net/get-involved/>

Brodie M. J., Schachter S. C. Fast facts – epilepsy. Oxford: Health Press Limited, 1999

# Seizure First Aid

## Tonic-clonic seizure

Is a convulsive seizure with loss of consciousness, muscle stiffening, falling, followed by jerking movements:

- Note the time the seizure started and time until it ends
- Protect the head – if available use a pillow or cushion
- Remove any hard objects that could cause injury
- Do not attempt to restrain the person or stop the jerking or put anything in their mouth
- As soon as possible roll the person onto their side – you may need to wait until the seizure movements have ceased (see pictures)
- Talk to the person to make sure they have regained full consciousness
- Stay with and reassure the person until they have recovered



## Seizure with impaired awareness

Is a non-convulsive seizure with outward signs of confusion, unresponsiveness or inappropriate behavior, care should be taken as this can be mistaken for alcohol or drug intoxication:

- Note the time the seizure started and time until it ends
- Avoid restraining the person and guide safely around objects
- Talk to the person to make sure they have regained full consciousness
- Stay with and reassure the person until they have recovered



## Additional considerations

When providing emergency response support to a person in a wheelchair, also:

- Protect the person from falling from the chair, secure seat belt where available and able
- Make sure wheelchair is secure
- Support head if there is no moulded head rest
- Do not try to remove the person from the wheelchair
- Tilt the persons head into a position that keeps the airway clear



## CALL 000 FOR AN AMBULANCE

For any seizure if you don't know the person or if there is **no** epilepsy management plan

If the seizure lasts for **5** minutes

If the seizure stops but the person does not regain consciousness within **5** minutes

If another seizure begins

When a serious injury has occurred, if it occurs in water, or if you believe the person is pregnant