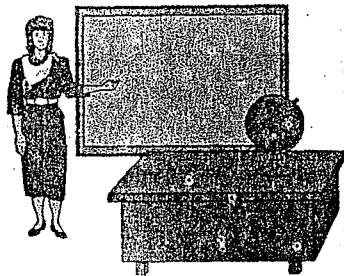


EPILEPSY AND SCHOOLING

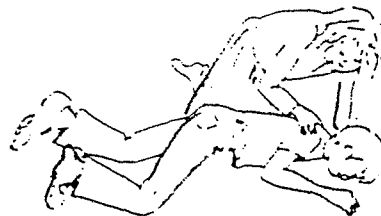
These children need to share the company of other children, go to normal schools and partake in the usual activities. They are normal children with a particular problem which is in fact much less disabling for many of them, than children suffering from other conditions. Children suffering from epilepsy should not be treated differently from normal children.

Although there is some evidence that in some children, learning and behavioral problems do rise in connection with their epilepsy, mainly due to the adverse reactions of the anticonvulsant drugs, the majority of them do well and go on to gain university degrees.



WHAT TO DO IF SOMEONE HAS A MAJOR FIT

- If the person falls near something dangerous like a fire, move them away; otherwise do not move the patient.
- Do not try to force anything between the teeth, since these may break.
- As soon as the jerking stops and breathing starts, make sure that the child can breathe freely.
- Loosen the clothing around the neck and put the child in the recovery position.
- Do nothing more - leave the child to recover.
- DO NOT:
 - * slap the face
 - * try to bring the child around
 - * give anything to drink
 - * restrain unless it is absolutely essential.
- If the child suffered an injury with which you cannot deal or if you cannot stop any bleeding, seek medical help.
- If a fit goes on for more than five minutes, or if the child does not regain consciousness within fifteen minutes of the end of the fit, medical assistance should be sought.



What is Epilepsy?

People with epilepsy lose control of their body, usually with complete or partial loss of consciousness, at various unexpected times. In other words, they may make movements without consciously wishing to do so and often without being aware of what is happening. This loss of conscious control may be referred to as an 'absence', 'blackout', 'convulsion', 'turn', 'seizure' or 'fit'. Lack of public understanding of epilepsy causes fear, and fear in turn induces prejudice. There can be no doubt that there is a general prejudice towards those with epilepsy, not only in Malta but throughout the world.

The following is some information for the parents/ family to help the child to grow up to enjoy a full and active life when previously it was thought all doom and gloom.



Carmen Deguara SROT (compiled as part of the final pediatric credit for the completion of the Diploma)

EPILEPSY AND LIFESTYLE

When epilepsy is diagnosed in the child, the first reactions, especially in the parents are shock and fright. This may lead to some degree of overprotection. But once the seizures are controlled and appropriate explanation and advice has been given both the parents and the child's confidence should grow and the latter should be encouraged to lead a normal life as much as possible. Ideally, children should be treated like other children and should take part in most of the activities that other children do, to ensure normal development.

Factors such as nature of the seizure, seizure frequency and duration and presence or absence of physical/intellectual retardation all impinge on the decision as to how much a child can do.

DRUG TREATMENT

Epilepsy cannot be cured but it can be controlled by medication. It is important that the parents/carers:

- Follow the doctor's instructions when giving the necessary drugs to their children.
- Do not increase the prescribed dose without the doctor's consent, even though the child might have suffered extra fits due to intoxication.
- Do not stop or reduce the prescribed dose without the doctor's consent since this can lead to severe generalized convulsions or even more severe consequences.

PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR CHILDREN WITH EPILEPSY

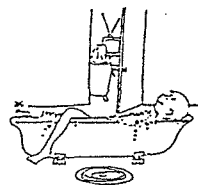
- * Swimming:
 - never swim alone
 - a companion/teacher should always be informed of the child's condition. First Aid in seizure care should always be shown in this case.



- * Bathing:

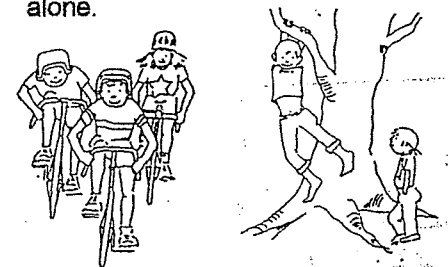
When using a bath

- the child should never be left alone in the house.
- the bathroom door should be kept ajar
- the bath water should be kept reasonably shallow.



When using the shower :

- the shower should be fitted with shatterproof glass
- if the child is alone in the shower unit, it might be difficult to get him out if he has a grand mal seizure during showering.
- A temperature control device should be fitted to the water system in the shower to avoid burns during a fit.
- * Bicycle or horse riding:
 - the child should wear a helmet.
 - he should ride in a protective environment
 - if possible the child should not ride alone.



- * Climbing
 - due to the dangers this activity presents, it should best be avoided.

PROVOKING FACTORS

There are a number of provoking factors which may trigger a fit in children with epilepsy. These are important, as they should obviously be avoided as much as possible. These include:

- lack of sleep
- stress
- alcohol
- infections
- drugs
- flashing lights.