

Some people with epilepsy only have seizures during their sleep. These are called nocturnal seizures. Others will have seizures during the day and at night.

States of sleep

There are two main kinds of sleep called non-rapid eye movement (NREM) and rapid eye movement (REM). During each kind different parts of the brain are more active. At night we alternate between these sleep states.

Generalised seizures are more likely to happen when there is NREM sleep. During a REM phase partial seizures are more likely.

Detecting sleep seizures

If you share your bed with someone they may notice you having a seizure during your sleep. If you sleep alone you might find that you have bitten your tongue or wet the bed when you wake up.

Lack of sleep can trigger some seizures. People with sleep seizures often have a disturbed sleep. This can increase the number of seizures they will have. It is important to try and make sure that you get enough sleep if you have seizures during the night.

Neurologists use the same methods to diagnose seizures as other kinds of epilepsy. This can mean having an EEG or an MRI scan. You may also be asked to stay overnight in a special unit where your brain activity can be monitored while you are sleeping.

Treatment of sleep seizures

Sleep seizures are treated in the same way as any other epileptic seizures. This may mean taking anti-epileptic drugs (AEDs).

Safety

There are a number of alarms available to alert another person when you have a sleep seizure. Some alarms detect movement, others detect moisture (if you wet yourself). We can provide more information on the types of alarms available and where to get them.

Early mornings

If you have sleep seizures you may find it difficult to get up early in the morning. Some people can find they feel very tired when they wake or may be disoriented. You may need to give yourself more time to get ready in the mornings. You can also think about the time you go to bed so that you feel well and are getting enough rest.

Some employers are able to change start times at work for people with sleep seizures. This is called a 'reasonable adjustment' and your employer needs to look at whether they can do this as part of the Disability Discrimination Act.

Sleep seizures and driving

You are allowed to drive if you have:

- been completely seizure free for 12 months
- OR
- have **only** had sleep seizures for 3 years.

This is because people who only have seizures during their sleep over a long period of time are much less likely to have seizures during the day.

However, if you have sleep seizures it may mean you are more tired during the day. Being tired is also dangerous when driving or operating machinery.

For more help and advice call our helpline 0808 800 2200
Text 07786 209 501
Or email us at enquiries@epilepsyscotland.org.uk