

Epilepsy alarms can be used to let someone know if you have a seizure. The alarms may not detect every seizure but can be part of a package of support. There are many different types of epilepsy alarms available. These alarms can alert someone who lives with you, or phone your emergency contact. This factsheet has information on the different types of alarms available and how to get one.

Which type of alarm should I get?

There are various different types of epilepsy alarms listed below. It is important to get the most suitable alarm for you. An Epilepsy Specialist Nurse, Epilepsy Fieldworker or Occupational Therapist may be able to help you decide. They will carry out an assessment to see if an alarm would be appropriate and help you decide which one to get. Our helpline can give you details of who to contact in your area for help.

Each type of alarm works differently, and the most suitable alarm will depend on the kind of epilepsy you have. Alarms can be set to alert someone living with you using a vibration, sound or noise. They can also be set to phone or page your emergency contact or call centre. You need a telephone line in your house or a mobile phone. **It is important to remember that alarms may not detect every seizure.**

Active alarms: An active alarm is one you operate yourself. This could mean pressing a button, or pulling a cord. You could use this alarm to call for help if you have injured yourself during a seizure. Active alarms are helpful if you get a warning before a seizure, and have enough time to activate it. The alarm can alert someone else, like a family member, emergency contact, or call centre.

The most common types of active alarms are telephone alarms or alarms that you wear. You can wear an alarm as a neck pendant, as a watch, or as a belt clip. You can also have an alarm button in your home. These all work in the same way. You press the alarm button if you know that you are about to have a seizure or need help after a seizure. Pendant alarms that you wear round your neck could be a risk during a seizure as they may get caught or tangled.

Different types of active alarms include:

- Telephone alarm
- Wrist watch alarm
- Neck pendant alarm
- Belt clip alarm
- Press call alarm

Passive alarms: A passive alarm works automatically. There are many types of passive alarms and each works differently. Some alarms can detect changes in your breathing pattern while asleep, or if you make noises during a seizure. Other types of alarm can

detect body fluids like urine and saliva. Alarms can also detect different types of movement. For example falling over, convulsive seizures, leaving a room or getting out of your bed or chair.

Examples of passive alarms include:

1. **Listening device:** This is a device that allows someone in a different room to hear what is happening. This type of alarm would be suitable if you always make sounds during a seizure, and you have someone close by who can listen. A baby monitor could be used in this way, making this type of alarm more easily available and less expensive than other types of alarms.
2. **Fall alarm:** This type of alarm can sense when someone falls to the ground. It should tell the difference between a sudden fall and normal movements, like bending over. The alarm is carried in a pocket or on a belt, and is about the size of a mobile phone. It can be set to dial a contact number, and the call can be cancelled if it is a false alarm. This type of alarm may not detect seizures if the person is sitting or lying down and would not be suitable for seizures where you don't fall over, like partial seizures.
3. **Moisture monitor:** This type of alarm is triggered when it becomes wet. It is usually fitted between the bed sheet and mattress. It detects if you wet the bed during a seizure. This alarm may not be suitable if either you wear absorbent pads or do not always pass urine during seizures.
4. **Bed seizure monitor:** The sensors are placed under the mattress and can detect tonic-clonic seizures at night. This type of monitor does not work for other types of seizures. The monitor may detect sound, movement and moisture. Some monitors can also detect changes in your heart rate or if you get out of bed. The sensitivity settings can be adjusted to tell the difference between normal night time movements and seizures. They may not detect every seizure.
5. **Breathing (apnoea) monitor:** A pad that can detect breathing is placed under the sheet on the bed. The sensors can detect if your breathing slows to less than 8 breaths per minute, or if breathing stops for more than 20 seconds. This type of alarm can be used if your breathing stops or slows down during your seizures, or if you are at risk of SUDEP (Sudden Unexpected Death in Epilepsy). If you move off the sensor pad at night the alarm will be triggered. Some systems combine the breathing monitor and bed seizure monitor, or they can be used together.
6. **Pressure mat:** This is a mat that is placed on the floor. If you stand on the mat the alarm will be raised. The mats are available in different sizes, depending on the supplier. The mat could be placed beside your bed or chair. This type of alarm may be useful if you have complex partial seizures.
7. **Motion sensor:** This type of alarm uses passive infrared sensors (PIR) which look for body heat. No energy is emitted from the sensor. Any movement triggers the alarm, for example a convulsive seizure, sitting up or walking about. The alarm can't tell the difference between seizures and other types of movement. It can be turned on and off as needed, for example only switched on at night.

8. **Door exit alarm:** This type of alarm can be fitted to any door. It is either triggered when the door is opened, or when someone wearing a special bracelet goes through the door. This type of alarm can be useful if you wander around during or just after a seizure. For example it could detect if someone left the house during a complex partial seizure. It can be set to work at particular times of day, for example detecting if the exit door is opened at night.
9. **TV or video monitoring:** It is possible to set up a video camera or closed circuit TV system. This allows someone to watch and see if you are having a seizure, without being in the same room as you. It requires someone, who could recognise when you are having a seizure, to be constantly watching the video image. It also means you would have no privacy while the camera was on.
10. **Mobile phone applications:** There is a free mobile phone application called Epdetect. It can be downloaded, but only works on some mobile phones. It can detect when someone is having a convulsive seizure and sends text messages to friends or carers. Some phones will also include details of your location in the message. This can help locate you in an emergency, but is dependent on your phone having this function. The sensitivity is not variable so it may not detect every convulsive seizure. The application works both indoors and outdoors, but is dependent on you having good mobile phone reception. If the alarm is triggered by accident you have up to 60 seconds to cancel the alarm before the messages are sent to your emergency contacts. You can adjust the length of time you have to cancel the alarm. For more information see : www.epdetect.com/index.html

How to get an epilepsy alarm

Some epilepsy alarms can be expensive. It is important to consider both the initial cost of buying the alarm and the on-going maintenance costs. It may be possible to get some help with the cost of your alarm. Here are some different suggestions:

- **Contact your local social work department:** In Scotland some alarms may be funded by your local authority. Someone from your social work department will visit you to find out your needs. This is called a Community Care Assessment or Single Shared Assessment. Your social work department may decide to pay for the cost and maintenance of an alarm.
- **Telecare Services:** Epilepsy alarms may be available through 'Telecare Services'. Some people may get help with the cost of the equipment and its maintenance, but you may have to pay for the services you receive. Different areas of Scotland have different ways of accessing telecare services. For more information about this please call our helpline on 0808 800 2200 or look at the Joint Improvement Team website: <http://www.jitscotland.org.uk/action-areas/telecare-in-scotland/>
- **Contact your local housing association:** Some housing associations can help you get an epilepsy alarm. If you rent a house or flat from a housing association you could ask them about this.
- **Muir Maxwell Trust:** Parents or carers of a child who has epilepsy can apply to the Muir Maxwell Trust for a voucher to cover the cost of a mattress alarm. They may also be able to help fund other items which can keep your child safe. You can call the Muir Maxwell Trust Office on 0131 273 5256.

- **Tuberous Sclerosis Association:** If you or your family member has tuberous sclerosis then the Tuberous Sclerosis Association (TSA) might be able to help. They can lend members a movement sensitive alarm for a short time. This means that you can try an alarm before deciding if you would like to get one of your own. You can telephone the TSA advisor in Scotland on 0751 059 5968.
- **Age Concern:** Age Concern can supply a pendant or wristband push button alarm through their Aid Call service. There is no age limit on who can use this service. When you push the button a base unit calls the Aid Call 24 hour emergency response centre. An operator then calls your emergency contact (friend, relative or neighbour). They can also contact the emergency services if appropriate. There is a charge for the Aid Call service, but it is not expensive. For more information call 0800 77 22 66 or www.aidcall.co.uk/support
- **Private purchase or other funding:** Some people choose to buy their own alarm. It is important to consider both the purchase cost and any cost of maintaining the alarm. You can ask the suppliers about the set-up and maintenance costs before you purchase your alarm. Epilepsy Scotland has information on other grants and trust funds that may be able to help with the cost of an alarm. Please contact our helpline for more information on this.

ALARM SUPPLIERS		
Sensorium	01383 720600	www.sensorium.co.uk
Easylink UK	01536 264869	www.easylinkuk.co.uk
Quality Enabling Devices Ltd	023 9258 0600	www.qedonline.co.uk
Age Concern	0800 772266	www.aidcall-alarms.co.uk (alarms to rent)
Emfit	0800 328 2950	http://www.emfit.com/ Email: info@emfit.com
Aremco	01622 858502	Email: aremco@onetel.com
Tunstall	01977 661234	www.tunstall.co.uk
Alert-IT	0845 217 9952	www.alert-it.co.uk/epilepsy
Health and Care	0207 821 0855	http://www.healthandcare.co.uk/epilepsy.html

Epilepsy Scotland does not recommend any particular alarm system or supplier.

For more help and information

Call our helpline 0808 800 2200, text 07786 209 501

Or email us at enquiries@epilepsyscotland.org.uk