

Life Stages®—

## For Infants and Toddlers With Epilepsy

During your child's early years, you marvel at how quickly and frequently you see changes and growth. Your excitement doesn't go away if your child starts to have seizures. But new questions and concerns arise. You want to know you're doing everything you can to care for your child in the best possible way.

This brochure addresses questions that families face when a young child has seizures. Reading the information—and discussing it with your family's health-care providers—might help you better understand how to respond to your child's epilepsy. As your child grows, your neurology care team (including neurologists, neurology nurse practitioners and nurses) at Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare can be an ongoing resource. Information the team provides can help you manage—and perhaps minimize—the effects that seizures have on your child's life.



## Information to Have on Hand

To help you provide care and inform others about your child's needs, keep the following materials in an easy-to-find location (on your refrigerator, for example):

- Name and description of your child's seizure type
- Descriptions of how your child might appear or behave during a seizure
- A plan explaining what to do if your child has a seizure
- Information about your child's medicines, including:
  - What to do if you miss a dose
  - Potential side effects
  - What to do if side effects occur
- A calendar (or some other tool) for tracking when your child:
  - Has seizures
  - Takes medicines
  - Experiences side effects from medicines
- A list of phone numbers to call for help under various circumstances

Your Gillette neurology care team can help you gather this information.

### Our Mission

Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare provides specialized health care for people who have short-term or long-term disabilities that began during childhood. We help children, adults and their families improve their health, achieve greater well-being and enjoy life.



St. Paul (Main) Campus  
200 University Ave. E.  
St. Paul, MN 55101  
651-291-2848  
800-719-4040 (toll-free)

Brainerd Lakes Clinic  
15860 Audubon Way  
Baxter, MN 56401  
218-824-5001  
800-878-4266 (toll-free)

Burnsville Clinic  
305 E. Nicollet Blvd.  
Burnsville, MN 55337  
952-223-3400  
866-881-7386 (toll-free)

Duluth Clinic  
Lakewalk Center  
1420 London Rd.  
Duluth, MN 55805  
218-728-6160  
800-903-7111 (toll-free)

Maple Grove Clinic  
9550 Upland Ln. N.  
Maple Grove, MN 55369  
763-496-6000  
888-218-0642 (toll-free)

Minnetonka Clinic  
6060 Clearwater Dr.  
Minnetonka, MN 55343  
952-936-0977  
800-277-1250 (toll-free)

Willmar Clinic  
Lakeland Health Center  
502 2nd St. S.W.  
Willmar, MN 56201  
651-634-1938  
800-578-4266 (toll-free)

Mobile Outreach Clinic  
For locations and schedules:  
651-634-1938  
800-578-4266 (toll-free)  
www.gilletechildrens.org



St. Paul – Phalen Clinic  
435 Phalen Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55130  
651-636-9443  
800-578-4266 (toll-free)

www.gilletechildrens.org

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Having epilepsy doesn't stop Alera from playing at the park with her mother, Pam.

## Q&A Common Questions

### Getting Medical Information

#### What caused my child's seizures?

Your neurologist can explain what kinds of circumstances lead to seizures. But sometimes, a cause for a person's seizures can't be found. An evaluation by your Gillette neurology care team can help determine if it's possible to identify a cause for your child's seizures.

#### Will the seizures affect my child's development?

Some seizures that continue, uncontrolled, for a long time can injure the brain. Seizures lasting less than three minutes usually don't affect a child's cognitive or physical abilities. Developmental delays might, however, result from:

- An underlying condition that caused your child's seizures
- Frequent drowsiness caused by your child's seizure medicine

Discuss any concerns with your neurology care team. Your feedback will help the team find medicines that control seizures while interfering as little as possible with your child's everyday activities.

#### What else should I tell our neurology care team?

Bring written observations about your child's seizures to your neurology appointments. The following steps are helpful:

- Keep a log of the dates, starting times and lengths of your child's seizures and of any other incidents—periods of staring, for example—that you think might be seizures.
- Write down any circumstances (such as sickness or unusual fatigue) that you think might have triggered a seizure.
- Describe in detail any of your child's other behaviors that concern you, including:
  - Inability to tolerate prescribed medications
  - Unexplained irritability
  - Inability to focus on you when you try to get your child's attention
  - Unexpected weight gain, weight loss or changes in appetite

Using a calendar to track information about your child's seizures might help show behavior patterns. That can help your neurology care team develop a treatment plan.

#### What should I tell our pediatrician?

Make sure your child's primary-care doctor knows about:

- Your child's seizure diagnosis
- Any seizure medicines your child takes

Although seizures rarely prevent a child from receiving scheduled immunizations, it's a good idea to ask your pediatrician if your child's vaccination plans should change.

### Providing Care at Home

#### Do seizures affect how I care for my child?

You must watch for signs of seizures and keep your child safe during any that occur. You might have to give your child medicine to stop or prevent seizures. Otherwise, children who have seizures need the same love, guidance and discipline as other children.

#### How will I know if my child is having a seizure?

Your neurology care team can give you a list of behaviors that could mean your child is having a seizure. Keep the list where you'll often see it. That should help you remember what signs to watch for—and recognize what behaviors probably aren't signs of a seizure.

#### What should I do if a seizure occurs?

Your neurology care team will help you create an emergency-management plan for seizures. Keep the plan where you can reach it quickly if your child has a seizure. The plan should explain what to do under various circumstances, such as:

- The seizure is typical and lasts for a short period of time
- Behavior during the seizure is unusual for your child
- The seizure lasts longer than usual

#### What should I know about my child's medicine?

To give any medicine safely, learn about it and take proper precautions:

- Work with your neurology care team to make sure you understand dosage instructions, including what to do if you miss a dose.
- Know the medicine's potential side effects and what to do if any occur.
- Never abruptly stop giving your child a seizure medicine. If you don't like the way your child responds to a medicine, your neurology care team can help you safely stop using it or switch to an alternative treatment.

#### When should I call someone for help?

Your neurology care team can help you make a list of circumstances that indicate you should call:

- Your pediatrician
- Your neurology care team
- 911 for an emergency response

Keep the list—including phone numbers to call—where you can quickly find it.

#### Who else can help?

There are many health-care providers who can evaluate how seizures might affect specific aspects of your child's life. Your neurology care team can refer you to such specialists at Gillette and elsewhere:

- A psychologist can assess your child's intellectual development and academic performance in school. A psychologist also can help you set reasonable behavior expectations for your child and find effective ways to provide discipline.

- A neurodevelopmental pediatrician can assess your child's overall development if you're concerned that your child isn't learning new skills as quickly as you'd expected.
- A neuropsychologist can assess how your child's epilepsy is affecting brain functions that direct learning and behavior.
- A speech and language pathologist can help identify and treat speech, language and feeding difficulties.
- Physical and occupational therapists can help your child improve motor skills, such as walking or using hands during play.

Your local school district also is an excellent resource. Ask about early-intervention programs, which provide therapy and education-planning services for infants and toddlers.

### Involving Other People

#### Who should know about my child's seizures?

Anyone left alone with your child should know how to recognize and respond to seizures. Use the "Information to Have on Hand" section of this booklet to help you remember what to tell caregivers, including:

- Family members
- Babysitters
- Child-care providers
- Teachers
- School nurses

### More Questions?

Call Gillette Telehealth Nursing at 651-229-3890 and ask to speak to one of our neurology nurse practitioners.

