

Life Stages[®]
For School-Age Children With Epilepsy





Q&A Common Questions

Cody's epilepsy doesn't keep him off the basketball court.

Going to School

Who at school should know about my child's seizures?

Give information about your child's seizures to adults who regularly interact with your child, including:

- Teachers
- Coaches and other activity leaders
- School nurses
- The principal or vice principal
- Bus drivers

What should I tell them?

To help prepare people to care for your child, tell them:

- The type(s) of seizures your child has had
- How you're managing seizures now
- How to respond to seizures that happen at school
- How and when to give your child medicine
- Whom to call if your child has a seizure at school

What else should I do?

To further prepare for the possibility of a seizure occurring at school, you might take the following steps:

- Grant school staff permission to give your child medicine for seizures. To do that, you must provide signatures from a parent or guardian and a health-care provider.

- Help school nursing staff create a seizure action plan, which tells school staff what to do if your child has a seizure.
- Work with your child's teacher to help other students understand what to do if they see your child have a seizure.

What can my child tell classmates?

To help other students understand what it's like to have epilepsy, your child could say several things, including:

- My epilepsy might cause me to have seizures while I'm at school.
- During a seizure, I might fall down, or my body might move in ways I can't control. I might not be able to talk. But my seizures usually stop on their own.
- If you think I'm having a seizure, tell an adult right away.
- After having a seizure, I might not remember that it happened.
- Sometimes, I might have to take medicine at school.
- My epilepsy isn't contagious. Other kids can't catch it.

Does my child need special-education services?

Children who have epilepsy are at risk for learning problems. If your child has developmental delays or has received early childhood special education (ECSE) services:

- Arrange to have school staff evaluate your child before school starts, to determine what education services are appropriate now.
- Seek additional assessments whenever your child has school-related difficulties.
- Discuss learning difficulties and behavior concerns with your Gillette neurology care team. Additional testing might be an option.

Playing With Other Kids

Can my child participate in physical activities?

It's tempting to be highly protective, but most children who have epilepsy can participate in the same activities their friends enjoy. Some precautions, however, are advised:

- Make sure your child wears a helmet whenever one is recommended for a sport or activity.
- Having a seizure and losing consciousness during some activities—such as swimming and climbing—can cause injury. Ask your health-care providers how you can help your child safely participate in such activities.

What if my child needs more restrictions?

If a health-care provider recommends your child avoid certain physical activities, look for alternate forms of recreation. Fitting in and being successful in front of other kids is important during the early school years. Seek activities that won't overwhelm your child but will present challenges. Children don't feel a sense of accomplishment if they're given goals that are too easy to achieve. If you'd like help finding recreation opportunities that suit your child, ask your neurology care team to refer you to a therapeutic recreation specialist.

Monitoring Behavior

What kinds of behavior might arise at this age?

Epilepsy doesn't automatically lead to behavioral or emotional disorders. However, some children who have seizures also experience such problems as:

- Aggression
- Impulsivity
- Attention difficulties
- Irritability
- Hyperactivity

How should I handle behavioral problems?

Most children respond well to structured, consistent discipline techniques. It can be tempting to excuse your child's disruptive behavior if you feel the epilepsy is at fault. In social settings, however, children are held accountable for their actions. So, it's important to start establishing behavior expectations when your child is young. For further help dealing with behavioral problems, you might have a school behavior specialist or a pediatric psychologist evaluate your child.

Do medicines affect behavior?

Difficult behavior can be a side effect of some epilepsy medicines. But don't assume medicines are to blame for all behavior problems. And don't assume all behavior problems are resolved if your child's seizures are controlled. If you're concerned about a medicine affecting your child's behavior, contact your neurology care team.

How might my child's epilepsy affect siblings?

Siblings sometimes become frustrated if parents have to devote a lot of time and attention to a brother's or sister's epilepsy. There are several ways to help siblings cope:

- Talk about their feelings. Assure your children that it's natural to sometimes feel angry about their sibling's epilepsy and to wish that their family were more like other families.
- Let them help. If possible, teach brothers and sisters to help care for their sibling or to contribute in other ways toward family needs. Assign appropriate responsibilities. Try not to overwhelm your children or interfere too heavily with their typical childhood activities.
- Set time aside for each of your children. Children like looking forward to scheduled one-on-one time with parents.
- When necessary, seek additional help. Some siblings of children who have epilepsy benefit from talking with a psychologist or a child life specialist. If you'd like such assistance, ask one of your health-care providers for more information.

More Questions?

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

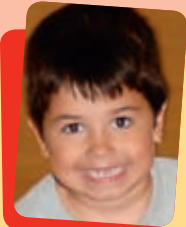


Life Stages®—

For School-Age Children with Epilepsy

Starting school can be both exciting and scary for children and their families. There's a lot to learn and many people to meet. Your child's epilepsy doesn't change any of that. But you might need to make extra preparations to help your child stay safe if a seizure occurs at school or somewhere else away from your home.

This brochure from Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare addresses questions that families face when a child who has seizures attends school. You might want to share the information with family members, health-care providers, school staff, and others who will spend time with your child during the next several years.



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
800-578-4266 (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.gillettechildrens.org



St. Paul – Phalen Clinic
435 Phalen Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55130
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