

**Louisiana Pharmacists Association**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Louisiana Pharmacists Association Educates Patients about Epilepsy**

Epilepsy is currently among the least understood major chronic medical conditions. Epilepsy affects more than 2 million Americans and over 65 million people worldwide. Approximately 1 in 26 Americans will develop the condition at some point in their life. Epilepsy is a disorder in the central nervous system that affects the normal nerve cell activity in the brain causing signaling malfunctions and resulting in seizures. The cause of epilepsy is often unknown, but the disorder has been attributed to illnesses, brain injury, or abnormal brain development in some patients. In order to diagnose epilepsy, multiple steps must be taken to ensure the patient is epileptic. Roughly 1 in 100 people in the United States will have an unprovoked seizure in their lifetime, but that does not mean they have epilepsy. A diagnosis of epilepsy usually requires at least two unprovoked seizures.

Symptoms of seizures may vary significantly from patient to patient as well as seizure to seizure for the same patient. A seizure may present as just staring blankly for a few seconds while at other times it can include repeated twitching of arms and legs. The different types of seizures include generalized tonic-clonic/grand mal seizures, absence/petit mal seizures, simple partial seizures, complex partial seizures, drop attack seizures, myoclonic seizures, and infantile seizures. Each type of seizure will cause different signs and symptoms in the patient and may require different levels of assistance. Grand mal seizures are identified by convulsions with loss of consciousness, stiffening of body, and jerking of limbs. Petit mal seizures are characterized by a staring, trance-like state. A drop attack seizure occurs when a patient abruptly falls due to either sudden muscle stiffness or sudden loss of muscle tone. A myoclonic seizure typically

presents with sudden muscle jerks. Partial seizures normally consist of a mixture of the above symptoms.

The goal of first aid for epilepsy is to keep the person out of harm's way until the seizure subsides. It is vital to know and understand how to respond to a person having a seizure, especially the most noticeable type, generalized tonic-clonic/grand mal seizure. The key aspects to remember when providing first-aid for someone during a seizure are as follows:

- Keep calm and reassure other people who may be nearby.
- Don't hold the person down or try to stop his movements.
- Time the seizure with your watch.
- Clear the area around the person of anything hard or sharp.
- Loosen ties or anything around the neck that may make breathing difficult.
- Put something flat and soft, like a folded jacket, under the head.
- Turn him or her gently onto one side. This will help keep the airway clear. Do not try to force the mouth open with any hard implement or with fingers.
- Don't attempt CPR except in the unlikely event that a person does not start breathing again after the seizure has stopped.
- Stay with the person until the seizure ends naturally.
- Be friendly and reassuring as consciousness returns.
- Offer to call a taxi, friend or relative to help the person get home if he seems confused or unable to get home by himself.

It is important for all epileptic patients to wear a Medic Alert bracelet or other source of identification in case of a seizure in public. This will allow others to better respond and accurately assist the patient. Patients may obtain a Medic Alert bracelet through the help of their local pharmacist. Epileptic patients are encouraged to speak with their pharmacists before beginning any new prescription or over-the-counter medications to limit the possibility of harmful drug interactions.

Resources:

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/epilepsy/DS00342>

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/epilepsy.html>

<http://www.epilepsyfoundation.org/>

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**The Louisiana Pharmacists Association, established in 1882, strives to promote the interests of all pharmacists of the State of Louisiana. For more information about the LPA and its benefits, contact Julie Fuselier or Phyllis Perron, LPA Co-Executive Directors at 225/346-6883 or visit our website at [www.louisianapharmacists.com](http://www.louisianapharmacists.com).**

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