

Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog

Editor’s Note: Content presented in the Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog is for awareness and informational purposes only, and it is not meant to be a diagnostic tool.

Everything is opening up just in time for summer! After being cooped up for 15 months due to the virus, everybody is excited to get summer started in a big way. The temperatures are steadily climbing towards the upper 90s and maybe even hit 100 degrees at some point. With rising temperatures, extra precautions have to be made for those with epilepsy to have a healthy and enjoyable summer. It is paramount that people with epilepsy be alerted to potential risks associated with scorching heat, and we need to convey the steps to steer clear of danger.

For one, there is evidence to suggest that epileptic seizures are more common in hotter temperatures. A 2020 study in Neurology and Neurobiology identified a “significantly higher rate” of these incidences in spring and summer. (The investigators did note, however, that exploration on the matter is fairly limited and that “further research combining different weather conditions and environments is needed to fully characterize the seasonality of epilepsy.”)

For another, some people with epilepsy may be particularly sensitive to heat, and seizures can result from heatstroke (a core body temperature that meets or exceeds 104°F). “The brain doesn’t function as well at higher temperatures,” notes Vikram Rao, MD, PhD, assistant professor of neurology at the University of California, San Francisco. If the brain misfires at elevated temperatures, it can trigger a seizure.

So, although every person with epilepsy is unique and risk levels vary depending on myriad factors such as diet and stress, there are certain things every person with epilepsy can do to stay a little safer when it is hot out. Here are some key summer safety tips⁴ to share with them:

1. Play it cool

Whether or not the person with epilepsy is particularly sensitive to heat, advise them to take the following precautions.

Limit sun exposure: Recommend that your patients partake in outdoor activities early in the morning or later in the evening to avoid midday high temperatures.

Stay hydrated: Your patients should drink four-to-six cups of water per day,⁵ and always stay hydrated before, during, and after exercising.

Listen to their body: Advise your patients to rest in a shaded or air-conditioned area if they feel thirsty, weak, or dizzy.

2. Prepare before going in (or out on) the water

Swimming and water sports are excellent options to stay cool, but there are certain precautions that should be taken.

Swim with a friend or loved one: A person with epilepsy should always avoid swimming alone. Instead, they should swim with someone who is able to respond quickly in the event of an emergency. If you are swimming in a public pool, you should alert the lifeguard ahead of time that someone in your party has epilepsy.

Check safety equipment: If you are planning to go rafting, boating, water skiing, surfing, or partake in another activity out on the water, be sure to check the life jackets and floatation devices ahead of time.

3. Travel smart

If their summer plans include a getaway, it is encouraged that you plan ahead for easier travel. You should:

Follow a medication routine: Flights, long drives, and changes in time zones can throw off medication routines. Be sure to establish a plan for staying on track and pack extra medication in case they encounter travel delays, or changes in plans.

Communicate: If you are flying, notify the TSA of any medically necessary liquids before screening. Be sure to let the cabin crew know that the person sitting with you has epilepsy and inform the cabin crew how to assist you should a seizure occur.

Takeaway

Epilepsy affects everybody differently. Just remember that it is critically important to plan ahead and be proactive so that your vacation can be an enjoyable one.

Editor's Note: The Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog will be distributed and posted weekly.
Always remember – **CARPE DIEM – SEIZE THE DAY!**

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