

Story Idea: *What You Should Know About Epilepsy and Seizure Disorders*

Contact: Kimberli Meadows, 301-918-3747, kmeadows@efa.org

How many times have you heard sticking a spoon in the mouth of a person having a seizure will prevent them from swallowing their tongue? And did you know that it is impossible to swallow your tongue—that, in fact, you are more likely to harm someone who is experiencing a seizure than help them if you attempt to restrain them or force anything into their mouths?

Widespread myths like this make epilepsy, a common neurological condition that makes people susceptible to seizures, one of the most misunderstood conditions of all time. The consistent lack of education surrounding seizures creates difficult challenges for those living with epilepsy. They might have problems in school, at work or at home.

People who live with epilepsy do not want to be labeled by their seizures; they want to live their lives free of the stigma frequently associated with epilepsy. It is important to inform your audience about the different types of seizures and the appropriate first aid for seizures—not only so they can better understand and help others, but so they will be better prepared if someone close to them develops epilepsy. After all, about 1 in every 100 Americans has epilepsy, and it can start at any age at any time.

Story Resources

- Collateral Materials (*available in both English and Spanish*):
 - a) *Seizures and First Aid*
 - b) *True or False: Fast Facts about Seizures and Epilepsy*
 - c) *Seizures After Sixty*
- **The Epilepsy Index**, an educational Web resource for general epilepsy information, www.epilepsyfoundation.org/answerplace/index.cfm.

Suggested Interview Questions

- If someone experiences a seizure what should be done?
- What should NOT be done if you see someone experiencing a seizure?
- How can you tell if someone is experiencing a seizure?
- Is there any difference in seizure first aid for children, adults and the elderly?
- What are the different types of seizures, including generalized tonic clonic, absence and simple partial?
- What causes seizures and can they be prevented?

- What type of physician can treat epilepsy?
- Is there a difference between epilepsy and seizure disorders?

Fast Facts

- More than 3 million Americans live with epilepsy.
- Epilepsy affects people of all ages, races and ethnic backgrounds.
- Every year, 181,000 Americans will develop seizures and epilepsy for the first time.
- With proper antiepileptic medications, most people with epilepsy can lead normal lives full of everyday experiences such as driving.
- The condition can develop at any time of life, especially in early childhood and old age.

Interview Opportunities

- Eric Hargis, president and CEO, the Epilepsy Foundation.
- Physician specialist.
- Denise Pease, Foundation Board member who lives with epilepsy.

About the Epilepsy Foundation

The Epilepsy Foundation, a national nonprofit with affiliated organizations throughout the United States, has led the fight against epilepsy since 1968. The Epilepsy Foundation will ensure that people with seizures are able to participate in all life experiences and will prevent, control and cure epilepsy through services, education, advocacy and research. For additional information, please visit www.epilepsyfoundation.org.