

If You Have Epilepsy, Do You Have a Seizure Rescue Medicine?



What Is Epilepsy?

Epilepsy is a group of brain disorders that cause seizures. Epileptic seizures result from a sudden increase in your brain's normal electrical activity. If you've had 2 or more seizures more than 24 hours apart, your doctor may diagnose you as having epilepsy.

Epilepsy can start at any age. Some people have epilepsy from birth, but others develop it later in life. Epilepsy can be caused by an epilepsy disorder or by a brain injury due to a stroke, accident, or infection. In many cases, the cause of epilepsy is never found.

Although epilepsy can sometimes go away on its own, most people will need lifelong treatment to help control seizures. Treatment may include medicine, surgery, devices, or special diets. Some people with epilepsy also use seizure rescue medicine for seizures that happen despite their normal treatment.

What Happens During a Seizure?

Seizures are sudden and can last from a few seconds to a few minutes. Just as there are many types of epilepsy, there are many types of seizures. Some seizures cause people to look confused, blink quickly, or stare into space. They may not reply when spoken to. Other seizures can cause people to cry out, fall, and grow stiff or shake. They may even lose consciousness. You can have more than 1 type of seizure, and your seizure pattern and treatment needs can change over time.

What Is Seizure Rescue Medicine?

A seizure rescue medicine is used to help stop an ongoing seizure quickly with the goal of trying to prevent a medical emergency. Rescue medicines are used to treat seizures that happen at home, work, or school. Your doctor may recommend a seizure rescue medicine if you:

- Still have seizures despite taking your daily seizure medicine correctly
- Are having longer seizures
- Are having more seizures in a shorter period of time (seizure clusters)

Although rescue medicines can help prevent trips to the hospital for a seizure, there may still be times when you need emergency medical care.

What Types of Seizure Medicines Are There?

Seizure rescue medicines that your doctor may recommend can include:

- Diazepam nasal spray, which is sprayed into the nose
- Diazepam rectal gel, which goes inside the rectum (the bottom)
- Midazolam nasal spray, which is sprayed into the nose

Seizure rescue medicines don't replace your daily seizure medicine. If your doctor recommends a rescue medicine, be sure to ask how it's used and when, how fast it should work, and about possible side effects.



Common Side Effects of Seizure Rescue Medicines

All medicine can have side effects. The most common side effects of seizure rescue medicines are headache and tiredness. Nasal sprays may also bother your nose or throat or cause a runny nose. With rectal gels, other common side effects can include dizziness, diarrhea, or rash.

If you take other medicines or have other health conditions, you may have an increased risk of side effects. Talk to your doctor about all medicines you take and your overall health. Be sure to tell your doctor if you take opioids, are pregnant or breastfeeding, or have glaucoma.

Talk to Your Doctor About a Seizure Action Plan

A seizure action plan is a document that helps you manage your epilepsy. It has information about you, your seizures, and the seizure medicines you take. It also tells others how to help you during a seizure. Your doctor can help you create a seizure action plan and keep it up to date.

Always keep a copy of your seizure action plan with you and at home where it's easy to find. Give copies to people you spend time with, like family members and friends. If you have a child with epilepsy, share the seizure action plan with the child's daycare or school and babysitters.