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# GUIDE TO DRIVING WITH EPILEPSY

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users. Depending on a person's epilepsy diagnosis and the condition's severity, they may have their driving privileges restricted. In some cases, the state will deny a driver's license altogether. However, state laws do vary when it comes to driving with epilepsy, requiring the attention of an attorney to determine whether you can legally operate a vehicle if you suffer from epileptic seizures.

Epilepsy causes seizures that can pose a risk for drivers and other road

protect all road users and prevent accidents caused by seizures. If you or a loved one have epilepsy, our experienced attorneys at Chopra & Nocerino are here to address your questions and concerns regarding seizure driving laws and what you can do to stay safe. Contact us online or call (855) NYC-HURT to schedule your free consultation.

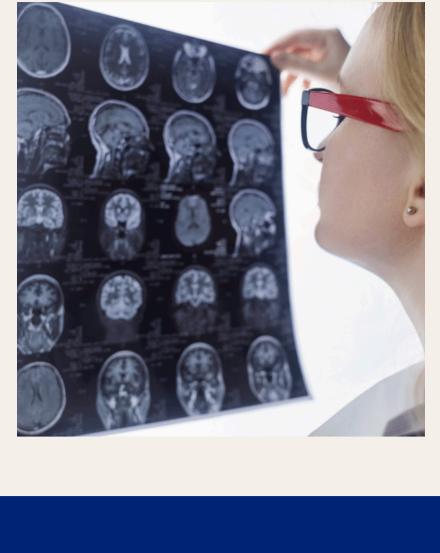
Laws and driving restrictions for people with epilepsy are meant to

### What Is Epilepsy? Epilepsy is a neurological disorder that causes abnormal electrical activity in the brain. These

electrical surges result in unprovoked seizures that can change the way a person moves or behaves. Epileptic seizures are recurring and may significantly affect a person's daily life, including their

and treatment can help people with this condition control their seizures and have a better quality of life.

ability to work, drive, and maintain interpersonal relationships. Getting an epilepsy diagnosis



# While there are different causes for epilepsy, many cases of recurring seizures are difficult to trace. However, doctors can evaluate risk factors to identify the

What Are the Causes of Epilepsy?

root cause of epilepsy in many patients. Common causes include:

#### Some people suffer from genetic epilepsy after inheriting genes that cause seizures. Families with a strong history of epilepsy are more likely to have children who develop epilepsy during childhood. The

Genetics

higher the number of seizure-causing genes a person inherits from their parents, the higher that person's risk of developing epilepsy. While it's clear that you can inherit epilepsy, uninherited gene changes can also lead to epilepsy. Additionally, environmental factors may also lead to genetic seizure development.

#### A traumatic brain injury (TBI) or other type of head injury may damage the brain structure and increase the risk of seizures. In fact, seizures occur in between <u>1 and 5 of every 10 people</u> who experienced a TBI. Depending on the head injury's location and severity, victims may suffer from:

• **Epilepsy** – Having more than one seizure after a TBI.

**Head Injuries** 

• Early post-traumatic seizures – A seizure within the first week following a brain injury. • Late post-traumatic seizures – A seizure that happens a week or more after a brain injury.

Epilepsy can result from different types of head injuries, including bullet wounds, internal brain bleeding, subdural hematomas, or injuries requiring brain surgery. Because medical treatment for brain injuries can be prohibitively expensive, speak with our experienced brain injury lawyers to seek

compensation if a preventable accident caused your head or brain injury. Infections

### bacterial meningitis, and viral encephalitis, can also cause epilepsy. These infections trigger an

lead to epilepsy.

inflammatory response that can damage the brain and cause recurrent seizures. Infections are the most common cause of epilepsy, especially in developing countries. Most seizure-causing viral, bacterial, and fungal infections are preventable. However, lack of resources, medical infrastructure, and access to care are strong risk factors for developing infections that ultimately

Serious infections in the central nervous system or brain, such as neurocysticercosis, cerebral malaria,

#### cells, it can cause autoimmune epilepsy. People who suffer from <u>autoimmune epilepsy</u> may experience:

**Autoimmune Epilepsy** 

 Focal seizures • Facial brachial dystonic seizures that affect the same side of the face and arm

When the body's immune system targets healthy cells, including brain

- Failed seizure medication treatment • Changes in personality, mood, behavior, or memory
- Dementia or Alzheimer's Disease

#### Research has established a link between dementia and epilepsy. Data shows that the longer a person has <u>Alzheimer's disease</u>, a common type of dementia, the more likely they are to suffer from epilepsy. People with

Alzheimer's disease may even experience seizures before they have memory problems.

#### Prevention reports that about 7 percent of people who have a stroke develop epilepsy within the following 30 months. Stroke-related epilepsy

Stroke

is typically treatable or controllable with anti-seizure medication.

Strokes that cause bleeding in the brain or serious brain damage are

often connected to epilepsy. The Centers for Disease Control and

#### affected by a metabolic disorder, patients may have recurring seizures from the imbalance.

Metabolic Epilepsy

Another common cause of epilepsy is metabolic abnormalities. When

the body does not break down food normally, it can affect how organs

function, which may lead to serious issues. For example, if the brain is

### epileptic seizures, including:

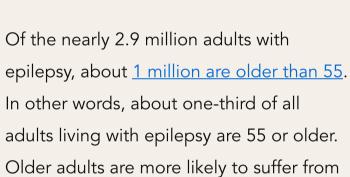
Who Is Affected by Epilepsy?

Epilepsy affects more than 50 million people across the globe, with 1.1 percent of U.S. adults living with this condition. According to the Epilepsy

Foundation, 1 in every 26 people develop epilepsy in their lifetime. While anyone can have epilepsy, some people have a higher risk of suffering from

Infants and

Children



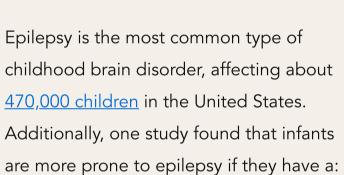
#### epilepsy due to their increased risk of developing: Alzheimer's disease and dementia

• Falls that cause head injuries

- Diseases and infections that affect the brain

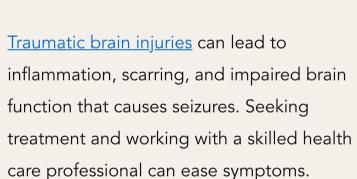
Strokes

**Seniors** 



 Premature birth Low birth weight Low Apgar score

• Traumatic brain injuries at birth



**Head Injury** 

**Patients** 

### Generalized Seizures Focal Seizures

What Are the Symptoms of Epilepsy That Can Affect

**Driving?** 

If a person has an epileptic seizure while driving, it can lead to serious accidents and injuries for everyone involved. Here are epilepsy symptoms that may

impair a driver's ability to maintain safety.

Generalized seizures are often severe episodes that may cause: People with epilepsy could also have <u>focal seizures</u>, which only affect one side of the brain and body. Although these seizures are Loss of consciousness typically less severe than generalized seizures, they can cause: • Spasms or stiffness

#### Going limp or collapsing A motorist experiencing these symptoms can lose control of their vehicle and hit other drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and other road

- users.

• Involuntary muscle contractions

Shaking or jerking motions

circumstances.

Following all medical advice

Getting enough rest

Taking your anti-seizure medication as instructed

• Identifying and avoiding seizure triggers

### Repetitive movements Changes in sensory function

• Involuntary twitching in the face, hands, or toes on one side of

- Cognitive impairment While a driver may remain conscious during a focal seizure, these symptoms can make it difficult to maintain control of their vehicle
- and stay safe on the road.

Changes in emotions or mood

Auras and other visual impairments

the body

#### Things you can do to improve your chances of securing a driver's license and staying safe while driving with epilepsy include: Sticking to your recommended diet Complying with mandatory reporting

Not driving if you don't feel well

Because epilepsy symptoms vary from person to person, many people can still drive with this condition. If you have epilepsy and want to drive, talk to your doctor to see if you are a good candidate. There may be restrictions or additional qualifications you must meet to retain your driver's license.

Is It Safe To Drive With Epilepsy?

Driving with epilepsy can be dangerous if seizures are not controlled using medication or other medical treatments. Research shows that the risks of driving

with epilepsy are somewhat predictable in people with controlled epilepsy, making it possible for these individuals to get behind the wheel under the right

**Driving With Epilepsy Laws** 

For example, New York epilepsy driving laws require drivers who experience epileptic loss of

consciousness to request a hearing and undergo a medical exam to determine if they can

- Your <u>driving eligibility</u> depends on your state's requirements and seizure driving laws, which may include:
- Being seizure-free for a specific timeframe

• Submitting a doctor's evaluation to show they can drive safely

keep or renew their driver's license. Additionally, you should consider the liability factor of driving with epilepsy. If drivers with

• Completing periodic medical exams

mandatory reporting.

epilepsy fail to follow medical advice, drive without a license, or do not notify the state of their condition, they could be held liable for the injuries and damages they cause. Doctors may also be held liable if they fail to evaluate an epileptic patient properly or do not complete

Consult an Experienced Attorney To Learn

legal options. Our trusted personal injury lawyers are real New Yorkers who won't back down when fighting for the full and fair compensation you deserve. Contact us online or call (855) NYC-HURT to schedule your free consultation at our Garden City law office. If you cannot come to us due to your injuries, we can schedule a meeting at a time and location convenient to you.

More

If you were injured in a car accident caused by an epileptic seizure, speak with our experienced car accident attorneys to learn more about your rights and

**Chopra & Nocerino, Injury & Accident Attorneys** Long Island, Nassau County Office

Map & Directions

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