



**Matthew Siravo Epilepsy Resource Center**  
"Matty Matters"  
*Helping others with Epilepsy*  
[www.MattyFund.org](http://www.MattyFund.org)

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According to the Epilepsy Foundation, "the number of people living with epilepsy in the U.S. is almost equal to the number living with Parkinson's disease, cerebral palsy and multiple sclerosis combined, yet epilepsy remains one of the world's most misunderstood conditions." *We established the Epilepsy Resource Center to provide support and resources to families living with epilepsy to ensure parents have all the information they need to advocate for their child; to increase awareness about the realities of epilepsy to ensure a welcoming, safe and happy environment for our children at school, home and play. We hope you find this information helpful!* - Richard and Debra Siravo

**Topic: Absence Seizures – Article reproduced from the Winter 2010 edition of Epilepsy Advocate**



Two specialists explain the challenges of childhood absence seizures and give advice to help your child succeed in spite of them.

**Q:** How does a childhood absence seizure differ from other seizure types?

**A:** Childhood absence seizures are a type of generalized seizure that begins and ends abruptly. Typical childhood absence seizures last less than 10 seconds. There is also an atypical form in which seizures may continue for up to 25 seconds. During seizures, observers of the child may notice blank staring and twitching around the mouth and eyelids. Another symptom is "freezing," or a sudden stop in movement or activity. "Some kids pick up where they left off. Some just start over," Martina Bebin says.

**Q:** How can I tell whether my child is experiencing absence seizures?

**A:** If you're concerned about your child's inattentiveness, Bebin suggests partnering with teachers to learn more about your child's classroom behavior. "Ask about class performance and test taking. Sometimes a child will have a seizure during a test, skip a page and hand it in incomplete without knowing it," she says. "Because teachers get a lot more education about different types of seizures now than ever before, it's often a teacher who brings the problem to the parents' attention."

**Q:** What should I do when my child is having a seizure?

**A:** "Besides keeping him physically safe, it's important to observe everything you can about

your child's behavior, as well as the length and any circumstances surrounding the beginning of the seizure," says Adriana Tanner. "It's very helpful for parents to keep a log of how long seizures last and how often they occur," she adds. Also, be sure to note anything that may have triggered the seizure.

**Q:** Can absence seizures affect my child's brain development?

**A:** "Brief absence seizures generally don't cause brain damage," says Tanner. "If a child has very frequent seizures, however, these interruptions can interfere with learning." Children should be tested for coexisting learning conditions. "If a learning disorder has been diagnosed along with absence seizures, we treat the seizures first and then address any learning issues to make sure the child is progressing as well as possible."

**Q:** Can my child take part in normal childhood activities?

**A:** "Yes, absolutely," says Bebin. However, even when seizures are well controlled, it's important that an adult who understands your child's condition supervise and watch closely for symptoms of an absence seizure. For example, children who experience an absence seizure while riding a bike may continue to pedal and end up in the street. But with awareness and education, children can participate in almost all activities.

**To learn more about absence seizures, visit [www.EpilepsyAdvocate.com/answers](http://www.EpilepsyAdvocate.com/answers).**

**Good Idea!**

**Create an Action Plan**

It is always a good idea to be prepared so that caretakers will know what to do and what information to give to emergency personnel should your child have a seizure in your absence.

- List seizure symptoms
- List known triggers
- List emergency contacts
- List Doctor's names and numbers
- List medications
- Note seizure type
- When to call "911"
- Check plan with doctor for suggestions
- Place copy in central locations
- Copy to babysitters, teachers, school nurse, family members

