

Failure to take seizure drugs linked to increased risk of death

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People with epilepsy who fail to take their seizure medication regularly could be as much as three times more likely to die, according to a study published in the June 18, 2008, online issue of *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

For the study, researchers looked at insurance records from three U.S. state Medicaid programs over eight and a half years. The study included 33,658 people with epilepsy who filled at least two epilepsy drug prescriptions.

The study found that people who took their epilepsy medication less than 80 percent of the time over the course of three months appeared to be three times more likely to die compared to people who took their medication regularly in a three-month period.

In addition, the study showed that hospital visits went up by 86 percent and emergency room visits increased by 50 percent during the time when people didn't take their medication regularly. There also appeared to be a significantly higher incidence of car accidents and bone breaks. Only head injuries were less common during periods of non-compliance with epilepsy drugs.

"These results are concerning since some studies show about 30 to 50 percent of people with epilepsy do not take their medication regularly," said study author Edward Faught, MD, Director of the University of Alabama Epilepsy Center in Birmingham and Fellow of the American

Academy of Neurology.

"There are many reasons epileptic patients fail to take their seizure medications, including cost, side effects and pregnancy. But this study suggests that none of those reasons overshadow the threat of death or other problems related to uncontrolled seizures. Patients need to stay on their medications and physicians need to recognize and treat issues related to people failing to take epilepsy drugs," said Faught.

Source: American Academy of Neurology

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