

Photosensitivity

Photosensitivity is the occurrence of epileptic discharges in response to flickering light. These discharges can result in an epileptic seizure. The frequency that usually triggers seizures is between 5 and 30 flashes per second (hertz).

The tendency to photosensitivity exists only in some people with epilepsy. It is detected usually by recording the EEG response to flashing lights for brief periods. You should ask your doctor or specialist whether you are at risk from flashing lights.

Helpful hints for people with known photosensitivity:

- Covering one eye may reduce the effects of flashing or flickering light if you are suddenly exposed to such a light.
- Wearing polarized sunglasses can reduce glare e.g. from light on water.
- Watching television or using computers in a well-lit room may help.
- Changing channels on a television using a remote control avoids being too close to the screen.
- Avoid poorly tuned or faulty televisions or consider one with a high frequency (100 hertz).
- Consider using computers with liquid crystal displays, which are flicker-free e.g. laptops.
- Taking regular breaks away from the screen can be helpful for everyone who uses computers.
- Read instructions and warnings on video game packages and take breaks when playing video games.
- Be cautious about parties, clubs, or amusement park rides that have flashing or flickering lights.
- Minimize the length of time exposed to a potential trigger, especially if you are tired.
- Avoiding becoming over-tired which may increase the risk of seizures.
- Speak to a GP or specialist about the risks of seizures as this varies from person to person.

A more detailed website on photosensitivity is <http://www.epilepsyse.org.uk/pages/info/leaflets/photo.cfm>

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