

IMPLICATIONS OF EPILEPSY: BEYOND SEIZURES

Seizure Response Dogs

Seizure response dogs are trained to keep a person with epilepsy safe during and after a seizure. For example, for persons who wander during a seizure, these dogs can be trained to recognize objects or areas where the person could be injured (traffic, stairs, or pools) and help them to avoid injury when wandering. This can be immensely reassuring for people who avoid activities because they fear having a seizure in public.

Some common tasks that specialized trainers can teach a seizure response dog include:

- staying close to the person with epilepsy to prevent injury
- fetching medication or a telephone
- alerting a caretaker by barking or pressing an alarm
- activating an emergency call system (e.g. pushing a Lifeline button)
- “blocking” a wandering person from walking into dangerous areas

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Training can take six months to two years depending on the specific tasks the dog must learn.

Myth: Seizure response dogs are trained to detect oncoming seizures.

Fact: Trainers cannot teach a dog to detect seizures, though some dogs may have this intuition.

■ The Lion’s Foundation of Canada

The Lion’s Foundation of Canada runs a seizure response dogs program. Based on an application process and available funds, they provide seizure response dogs at no cost to eligible Canadians living with epilepsy. They train each seizure response dog to recognize the specific physical characteristics of their handler’s seizures. Lifestyle is also factored into the process to ensure personalities are compatible for a long life as a working team. For more information about the Lion’s Foundation of Canada’s Seizure Response Dog program or to apply for a seizure response dog, visit www.dogguides.com.