

21.

**Training package for a family
member of a person who has fits**
Information about the disability and
what you can do about it

What Is This Package For?

The information in this package will help you to understand the disability of a person who has fits. The instructions explain what to do about the fits, what to tell other people, and how to help the person to be safe in daily activities.



**World Health Organization
Geneva, 1989**

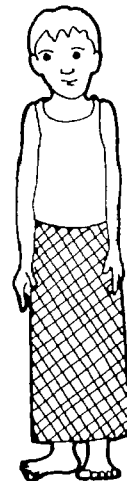
21. Training package for a family member of a person who has fits

Information about the disability and what you can do about it

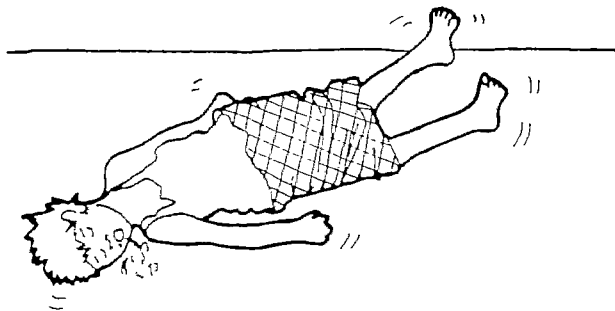
- Many people have fits. A person may have fits very often or a person may have a fit only once.
- A disease inside the head causes fits. Sometimes the fit comes after a fever.
- If a person has fits often, he or she needs to be seen by a health worker. The person needs special medicine.

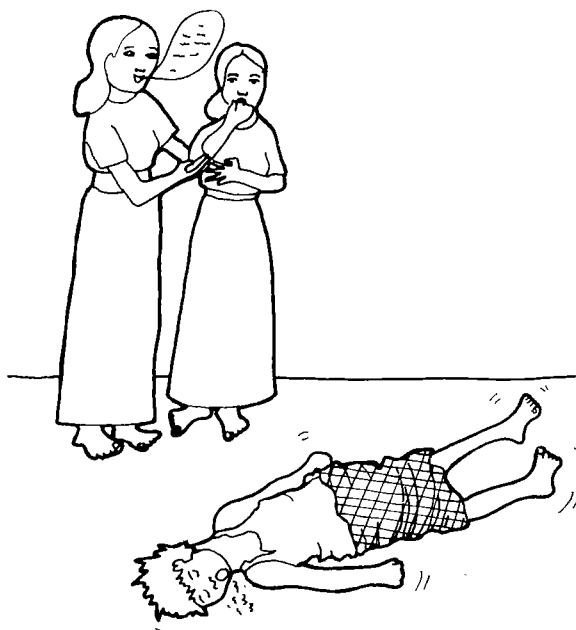
What is a fit?

- Fits can be either mild or severe.
- When a person has a mild fit, he or she suddenly stops whatever he or she is doing. The person stares straight ahead, sometimes without blinking. There might also be some unusual movements, for instance, repeated movement of the lips or hands.



- When a person has a severe fit, the person falls to the ground. There are usually no signs that he or she is going to do this. He or she may also cry out. At first the body becomes stiff and then it becomes loose.





■ While having a severe fit, the person's arms and legs move in an unusual way. The movements may be violent at times. Saliva comes out from the person's mouth. The saliva may be red from blood if the person has bitten the tongue or the inside of the mouth.

■ Without knowing it, the person may pass urine and faeces while having a fit.

■ People who see a person having a fit may be upset by it and be afraid. This is normal.

■ A fit usually lasts for only a short time. During the fit the person is not in pain. He or she will not die from the fit.

■ Some people often have a special feeling before having a fit. If so, the person can usually tell when he or she is going to have one.

■ Other people can sometimes see when a person is going to have a fit. They may see one or more of the following signs:

The person stares or daydreams.

The person's head or face moves in an unusual way.

The person's eyes roll upwards.

The person makes unusual sounds and body movements.



■ The person you train may have a special feeling or you may see one of these signs each time before the person has a fit. Then it will be understood that the person is going to have a fit. Teach him or her to lie down quickly in a safe place before the fit begins. This will prevent the person from being injured during a fit.

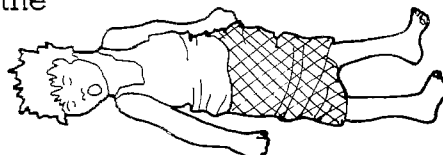
What to do while the person is having a fit

- When the person starts to have a fit, you should do the following:

Be calm and tell other people who are around not to be afraid.

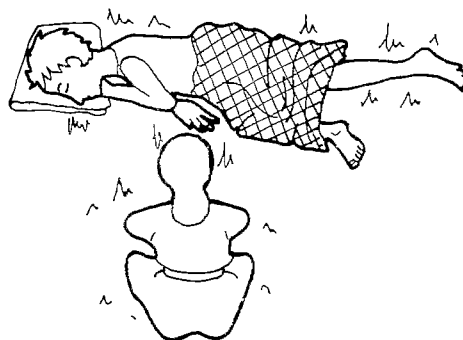
Make the person lie down in a safe place. Move the person away from any danger, such as traffic or fire.

Fold a cloth or piece of clothing and put it under the person's head.



Loosen any tight clothing that the person is wearing.

- Turn the person onto his or her side so that the tongue falls to the front of the mouth. Then any saliva will flow out of the mouth making it easier for the person to breathe.



- Stay near the person until the fit is over and the person knows what is happening around him or her. Comfort the person. Explain what has happened as the person may not know what has happened. Let the person rest.

- There are some things that will not help and may even hurt the person while he or she is having a fit. You should *not* do the following:

Do not put anything in the person's mouth.

Do not give the person anything to eat or drink.

Do not give the person any medicine.

Do not try to stop any unusual body movements.

Do not put anything on the person's skin.

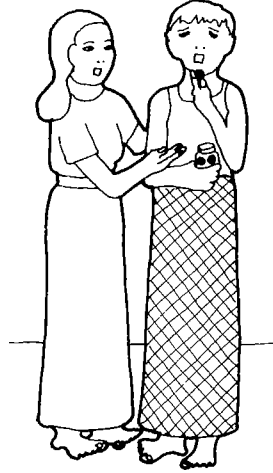
- The person may be injured after the fit. If so, you should do the following:

Wash any small cuts and scratches with soap and water, and cover them with a piece of clean cloth.

Take the person to the health worker or to the health centre to treat any burns or bad injuries.

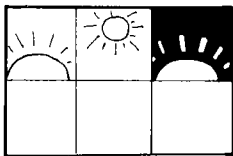
Medicine for the person

■ If a person has fits more than once, see the health worker about it. The person may need special medicine that will help to make the fits happen less often or will stop the fits completely. The health worker will find out if the person needs medicine.



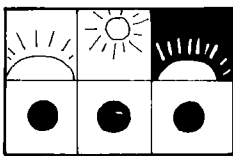
■ If the person takes medicine for the fits, make sure that the person takes it at the correct times and for the correct number of days. Teach the person to take the medicine at the correct times.

The person should not stop taking the medicine until the health worker tells him or her to stop.

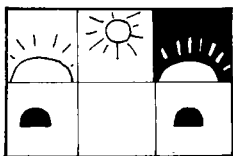


■ If the person cannot read, help him or her to remember when to take the medicine. This picture shows a table which helps the person to know when to take the medicine.

In the empty squares at the bottom you draw the number of pills the person should take and how often he or she should take them. Carefully explain to the person what the table means.



■ This picture shows that the person should take one pill three times a day. The person should take one pill in the morning, one pill in the middle of the day, and one pill in the evening.



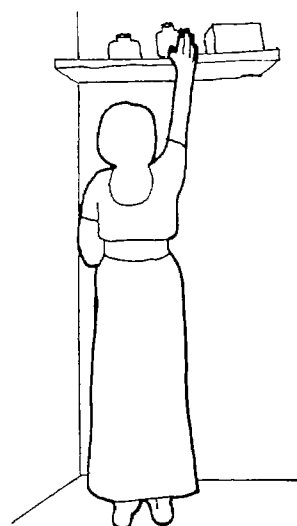
■ This picture shows that the person should take half a pill two times a day. The person should take half of the pill in the morning and half of the pill in the evening.



■ Before the medicine is finished, get more from the same health worker who gave it to you. Be sure that the person you train is never without medicine.

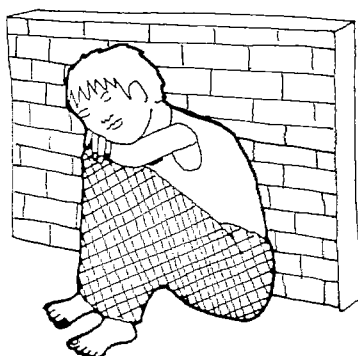
■ Once the person starts taking the medicine from the health worker, it may take some time before the medicine helps the fits to happen less often.

Until the fits happen less often, do not leave the person alone for long. Arrange with friends or neighbours to visit and help the person when you are away. Then the person will not be left alone.



■ Always keep medicines in a special place where children cannot reach them. A high shelf is a good place.

■ If the medicine makes the person very sleepy or easily upset, tell this to the health worker.



■ The health worker will want to know how often the person has fits and how long each fit lasts. The health worker will also want to know at what time of the day the person has fits. You should be able to tell these things to the health worker.

■ The behaviour of a person with fits sometimes changes. A person with fits may become very active and difficult to control.

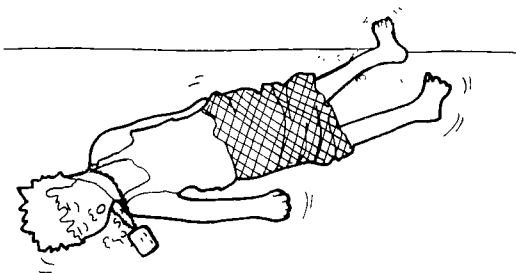
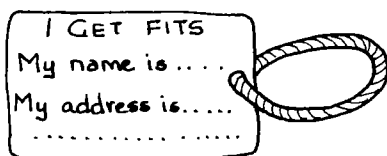
If the person you train shows a change in behaviour, tell your Local Supervisor about this.



What to tell other people



■ It will help the person if you tell friends and neighbours about the fits. Tell them also what to do if the person has a fit when he or she is with them. Then friends and neighbours will not be afraid to be with the person.

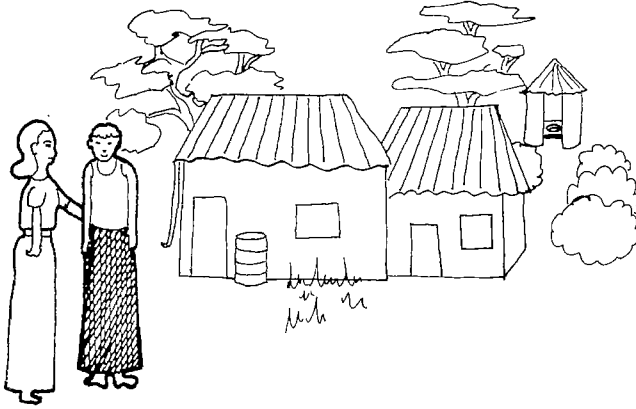


■ Sometimes, the person may have a fit when he or she is out alone. If this happens, other people must know that the person is having a fit. To let other people know this make a small card for the person to carry around. This card should give the name of the person and say that he or she has fits. Then when other people find the person on the ground, they will read this card and know what has happened.

Make the card of heavy cardboard, wood, or light metal. Pin the card to the inside of the person's clothes. Or hang the card around the person's neck on a piece of string.

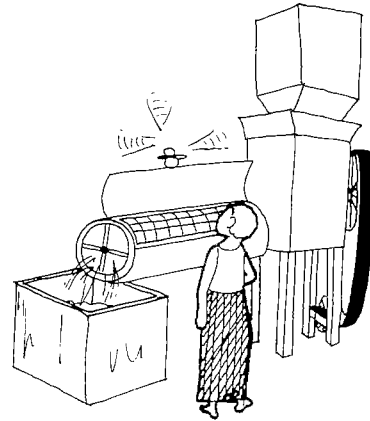
Safety for the person

■ Make simple arrangements at home, at school, or at work to keep the person from being hurt while having a fit.

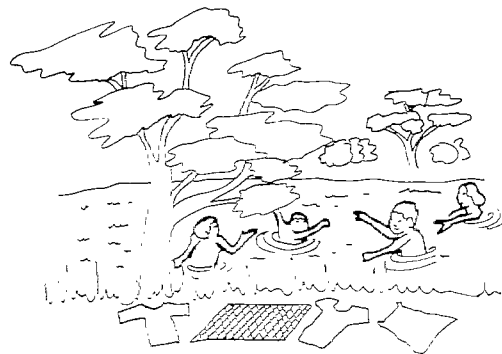


■ The person you train needs a safe home in which to live. The person's home may need improvement. For example, a roof or wall may need repairing. If so, speak to your community leaders about this and ask for their help.

■ If the person who has fits works with a machine or works close to a machine, it should be covered. In this way you can protect the person from injuries.



■ The person should not bathe alone or work alone in a river or lake.



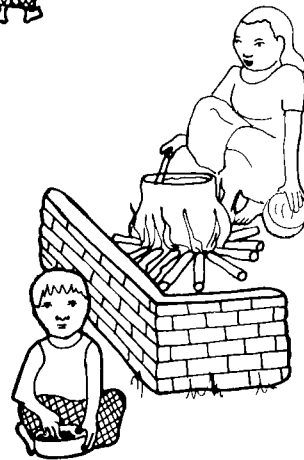
■ The person should not work high above the ground such as on a roof or on a ladder. He or she might fall while having a fit and be injured.



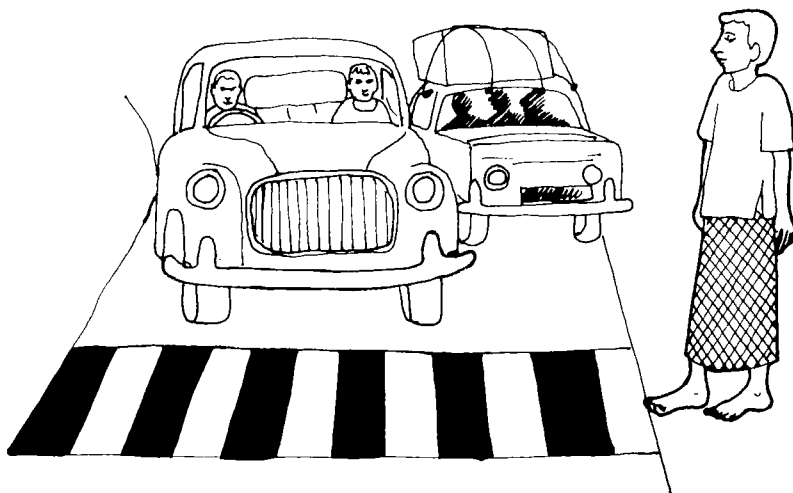
■ Surround wells and fireplaces with fences or walls so that the person will not fall in the well or on the fire while having a fit.

For the same reason the person should not sit or work too close to water or a fire.

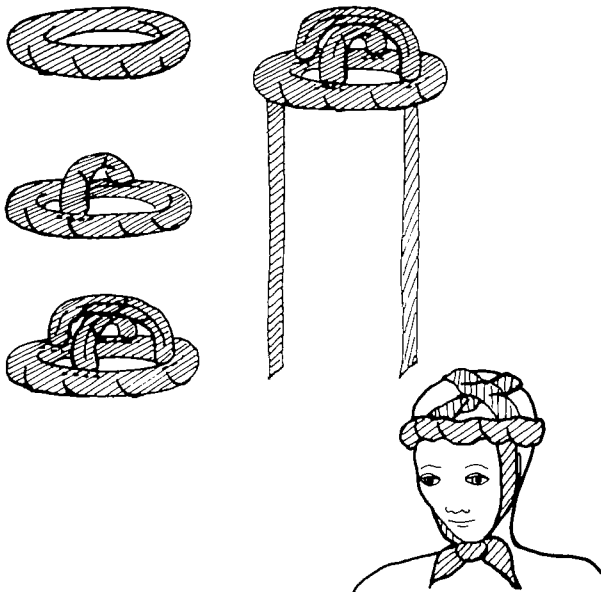
■ The person should not look for too long at a fire or flickering light. Sometimes this can bring on a fit.



■ Teach the person to cross roads safely. The person should walk on the side of the road facing the direction in which traffic is coming.



■ When you are training the person to cross the road, teach him or her to listen and to look for traffic from both sides. Explain to the person that he or she must cross the road only when the road is clear or the traffic has stopped. Tell the person to cross the road always at the same place. If there are signs to show where people can cross the road, teach the person to cross there.



■ Some people who have fits injure their heads when they fall during a fit. If the person injures his or her head often, make a hat to protect the head.

You can make this hat from thick rolls of cloth. Stitch one roll of cloth to fit around the person's head. Then stitch two other rolls of cloth to that one. One of these two should go from the front of the head to the back, and the other from side to side. Also fix two pieces of cloth to use for tying the hat on the head.

What the person needs to be able to do

■ A child who has fits needs to be treated like other children of the same age. An adult who has fits needs to be treated like other adults. A child or an adult who has fits should be able to live a normal life. Help the person you train to lead a life similar to others of his or her age.

■ A person who has fits needs to be able to do the same things that other people of the same age do.

A baby who has fits needs to be breast-fed and to play like other babies.

A child who has fits needs to play. The child needs to be able to feed himself or herself, to drink and to dress. The child needs to be able to wash and keep clean, and to go to school like other children.

An adult who has fits needs to be able to do household activities, to work, and to join in family and community activities.

■ The person you train may not be doing these things. If the person is not doing any of these things, speak to your Local Supervisor about it. Your Local Supervisor will give you Training Packages which you can use to train the person.



Results

After you have read this package, you can check your understanding by answering the following questions:

- What should you do when the person has a fit?
- What causes a fit?
- What can you do to protect the person who has fits?

Now check back in the package to see if your answers are correct. If any answer is wrong, read the package again. Then answer the question again and check your answer. If you have any trouble doing this, you can discuss it with your Local Supervisor.

To check your knowledge about medicine for fits, answer the following questions:

– How often does the person have fits?

How many times a day?
How many times a week?
How many times a month?

You can check your answers by watching the person.

– How many times a day should the person take medicine?

You can check your answer with the health worker.

– How many times a day does the person take the medicine?

If the person takes the medicine at the correct times, you have both done well. If the person does not take the medicine at the correct times, teach him or her to do this. Make sure that the person continues taking the medicine. When you know the answers to the above questions and when the person continues taking the medicine correctly, you no longer need this package.





Training packages

For family members of people who have difficulty seeing

1. Information about the disability and what you can do about it
2. How to train the person to take care of himself or herself
3. How to train the person to move around

For family members of people who have difficulty speaking and hearing or speaking and moving

4. Information about the disability and what you can do about it
5. For the child who has difficulty hearing and has not learned to speak — how to train the child to communicate
6. For the adult who has difficulty hearing but can speak — how to train the person to communicate
7. For the child who has difficulty speaking and moving but can hear — how to train the child to communicate

For family members of people who have difficulty moving

8. Information about the disability and what you can do about it
9. How to prevent deformities of the person's arms and legs
10. How to prevent sores from pressure on the skin
11. How to train the person to turn over and sit
12. How to train the person to move from sitting to standing
13. How to train the person to move around
14. How to train the person to take care of himself or herself
15. How to train a person who has aches and pains in the back or the joints to do daily activities
16. Exercises for weak, stiff or painful arms and legs

For family members of people who have no feeling in the hands or feet

17. Information about the disability and what you can do about it
18. How to prevent injuries and deformities of the hands and feet

For family members of adults who show strange behaviour

19. Information about the disability and what you can do about it
20. How to train the person to take care of himself or herself

For family members of people who have fits

21. Information about the disability and what you can do about it

For family members of people who have difficulty learning

22. Information about the disability and what you can do about it
23. How to train a child who has difficulty learning to take care of himself or herself
24. How to train an adult who has difficulty learning to take care of himself or herself

General

25. Breast-feeding a baby who has a disability
26. Play activities for a child who has a disability
27. Schooling
28. Social activities
29. Household activities
30. Job placement