SUDEP
(Sudden, Unexpected Death in a Person with Epilepsy)

Epilepsy Center
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HartfordHealthCare.org/Epilepsy
Each year, there are about 2,750 cases of SUDEP or sudden, unexpected death of a person with epilepsy in which no other cause of death is found. One of every 1,000 people with epilepsy may die of SUDEP each year, a number that increases to 1 in every 100 for people with poorly controlled seizures.

You are at higher risk of SUDEP if you have had epilepsy for 15 years or more and/or:

- Frequent, uncontrolled convulsions
- Trouble taking your seizure medications properly
- Seizures while sleeping
- Intellectual disability

Males are also more likely to die from SUDEP than females.

What causes SUDEP?
We do not know the exact cause of SUDEP, but scientists think it is caused by such things as breathing problems, heart rhythm changes and loss of normal brain function during a seizure. In addition, several gene mutations were found in patients who died from SUDEP, suggesting they might be more prone to these problems during a seizure.

There is ongoing research into the causes of SUDEP and ways to lower one's risk.

How can I prevent SUDEP?
The most effective way to lower your risk of SUDEP is to reduce the number of seizures you have as much as possible. You can do this by taking the right medication(s) when you should and avoiding seizure triggers. Some patients find alternative treatment such as brain surgery or neurostimulation devices to be the best way to control their seizures.

You can talk to your doctor about your concerns.
The following websites also contain good information:

epilepsy.com
cdc.gov/epilepsy
aesnet.org
dannydid.org
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