

Living with epilepsy

TIPS FOR TEENAGERS



life-changing •
minutes

KNOWING EPILEPSY



What is epilepsy?¹

Epilepsy is a medical condition that affects the brain and causes seizures.

Around 65 million people in the world live with epilepsy, making it one of the most common neurological disorders.¹

What is a seizure?¹

A seizure is a sudden and temporary change in the electrical and chemical activity in the brain which leads to a change a person's movement, behaviour, level of awareness, and/or feelings.

Most common triggers are:²

- Forgetting to take prescribed seizure medication and low medication levels.
- Lack of sleep and missing meals.
- Stress, illness or fever.
- Menstruation/hormonal changes.
- Flickering lights of computers, television, videos, etc.
- Excessive alcohol or drug use and subsequent withdrawal.



LIFESTYLE TIPS

Medication²

Anti-epileptic drugs (AEDs) are the main treatment for epilepsy.

Here you have some tips for taking your medication:

- Take your AEDs every day, it's really important.
- If you forget your AEDs, take them as soon as you remember. If you're late by over six hours just take your evening tablet earlier than usual. Don't take morning and evening tablets together.
- Take your AEDs even if you are feeling ill.
- Never suddenly stop taking your tablets because this can often make your seizures worse.
- Avoid running out of tablets.
- If you are having side effects from your AEDs talk to your doctor about it.

Diet^{1,2}

- Avoid missing meals and having low blood sugar level. Both factors can provoke a seizure.
- Try to drink plenty of water and maintain a diet rich in vegetables.
- Keep healthy snacks (fruit, nuts...) ready for when you've run out of energy.
- Avoid energy drinks which contain large amounts of caffeine.





Sleep²

- You should sleep eight hours a day. Lack of sleep can cause seizures.
- Avoid stimulants like caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, and chocolate for at least six hours before bed.
- Close down your computer, tablet or phone at least an hour before bed.
- Regular exercise will help improve your sleep. Avoid exercising late at night; try doing it earlier in the day.
- Keep naps less than an hour long.

Excercise²

- Doing sports and exercise can often help you better manage your epilepsy.
- You should never swim or do water sports alone.
- Avoid extreme sports such as bungee jumping, hang-gliding and skydiving.
- Contact sports (football, basketball, handball...) are recommended. The chances of serious injury are small compared with the positive effects of team participation.



HOW TO DEAL WITH EMOTIONS



Being a teenager with epilepsy can be hard sometimes.²

You may feel like epilepsy is ruling your life and no one else understands what you are going through. It can make some people feel sad, anxious, angry and frustrated. These feelings can stop you from sleeping or eating properly, affect your relationships with friends/family, or impact on your school or work life.²

What can help to feel me better?^{1,2}

GET HELP.

You don't have to struggle alone, as there are always people who want to help.

If you need support with school life, make sure you **talk to people like your parents, teachers, school counsellors, as well as your doctor or nurse. You don't have to deal with it alone.**

GET EMPOWERED.

Understanding your epilepsy and how it affects you can help improve your confidence and self esteem, and empower you to deal with the challenges ahead of you.

GET INVOLVED.

Talking to others who are going through the same things can also help. **Joining a support group or self-management programme can provide you with the skills to help you manage your general wellbeing.**

How to deal with my parents?^{1,2}

You must know that your parents are going to be worried about your safety and health. Sometimes it might feel like your parents are being overprotective.

Try talking to them about your feelings. The more you talk with your parents, the more they will know, understand, and trust you.

Listen to their reasons for being worried and try to come to a compromise, for example: always carry your medication or call them when you get to your destination.

Prove to them that you can take care of yourself following all the recommendations and not doing something that can make your condition worse.



REFERENCES:

1. Epilepsy Ireland. A Guide For Young People with Epilepsy. Available at: https://www.epilepsy.ie/sites/www.epilepsy.ie/files/Teens_Booklet%202018.pdf
2. Epilepsy Foundation. Young People and Epilepsy. Available at: <https://epilepsyfoundation.org.au/managing-epilepsy/young-people-andepilepsy/>

For more information: www.knowingepilepsy.com



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