

# Improve Your Seizure Control



## Take medication as prescribed

Taking medicines daily can be hard to remember. Sometimes medicine schedules are complex and hard to follow, especially if medicines are taken many times a day. If you're new to seizures, talk to your health care provider about your medicines and what's expected. Make sure you know details of what you take, how often, when, and why. You'll also need to learn some new skills, such as how to take medicines safely and consistently. For example:

- Checking your medicine and pill sizes to know if you have the right one and correct dose.
- Following special instruction for different forms of seizure medicines.
- Setting times to take medicines as prescribed by your doctor or nurse.
- Recognizing side effects and when to call your provider.
- Getting blood tests done if needed.
- Tracking if medicines are working.

## Seizure triggers

Some people find that certain situations, habits, health problems, or medications can affect their seizures. For example, not sleeping well or too much stress can make some people more likely to have a seizure. Missing doses of seizure medicine makes you likely to have more seizures and is a common cause of breakthrough seizures and emergencies.

When you are first diagnosed with epilepsy, it's important to note when you have a seizure and if any triggers can be identified. Some examples of seizure triggers include:

- Missing seizure medicine or stopping them suddenly
- Not getting enough sleep or not good quality sleep
- Stress
- Being sick with another illness or fever
- Flashing lights in people who are photosensitive
- Menstrual cycles or other hormonal changes
- Alcohol or drug use (Too much alcohol can make a person more likely to have seizures, especially the day after drinking.)
- Certain prescription or over-the-counter medicines
- Some herbal products or supplements
- Low levels of certain minerals or substances in the body (for example, low levels of sodium or salt, magnesium, or calcium).



### What do I do about triggers?

If you find things you think could affect seizures, keep track of them over time and see how often they happen. If they often happen before seizures, then it's time to see if you can change or avoid the trigger. Can you change your lifestyle? Avoid the trigger?

Share your observations with your health care team and talk about what you can do to prevent or lessen your seizure risk this way.

*continued on pg 2*

Focus on your overall wellness. Having healthy daily routines also can help improve seizure control. Here's a few things that can help:

- Keep a regular sleep pattern – go to bed and get up at the same time each day.
- Drink plenty of fluids and stay hydrated.
- Pay attention to your overall emotional health.
- Eat regularly and have a healthy diet.
- Have a strong support system of family and friends.
- Exercise in a safe manner; avoid getting overheated, overtired, or dehydrated.
- Look at how you cope with stress – talk with others; give and get support!
- Keep a seizure diary – such as My Seizure Diary or a paper diary – to help you check your progress.



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## Managing stress

Many people with epilepsy think that emotional stress may affect their seizures. Or maybe stress can affect how you sleep, eat, or feel in general. Some may notice times they feel scared, worried, sad, or depressed separate from their seizures. A few tips to think about:

- Talk about how you feel with your health care providers. Let them know if your mood changes.
- Try deep breathing, meditation, exercise, or other ways to help you relax and manage stress.
- Talk with your health care provider if you are having trouble sleeping. Sleep problems can trigger seizures or be a symptom of something else.
- If mood changes continue or last longer than a few weeks, tell your doctor and ask for help.

## Menstrual cycles

About half the women of childbearing age who have epilepsy report more seizures around the time of their menses or in the middle of their cycle. Keeping track of when seizures occur can help women find out if there are any connections. Talk with your health care team about monitoring your hormones and other health conditions. For some women, this could lead to other ways to improve seizure control.



## Strive to stop seizures

Getting the best seizure control possible is one step towards improving your health and lessening the risk for SUDEP. Don't give up or settle for life with continued seizures. Be proactive and see an epilepsy specialist if you are still having seizures or side effects of medicines.

Some people with certain types of epilepsy find it very hard to control their seizures. They may also have other problems that affect their ability to move, feel, think, talk, and do other things. These other problems are often called comorbidities and can make managing epilepsy more difficult. Being seen at a comprehensive epilepsy center may help you look at all options to improve seizure control and how epilepsy affects your health and quality of life.