

Top ten tips for living with epilepsy

1. **Take your medication as prescribed** as this controls seizures in most people. Forgetting a dose, changing the time you take medication or using a different brand can trigger a seizure.
2. **Learn more about your condition** from reliable sources such as your doctor, pharmacist, Epilepsy Australia or other health care professionals, gathering as much information as you can to understand the type of seizures you have, to enable you to manage your epilepsy better and educate those around you about your condition.
3. **Know your triggers and try to manage them.** For example missed medication, illness and fever, stress, lack of sleep, menstruation, extremes or changes in temperature or flickering light can be a trigger.
4. **Keep a seizure diary** – as you may not be aware when you are having a seizure or remember that one occurred, ask someone to write a detailed description each time you have a seizure and keep the date, time and what happened before and after the seizure. Take it to each doctor's appointment as it will help you identify triggers and see if your medication is working.
5. **Have a healthy, balanced lifestyle** – people living with epilepsy can do a lot to help themselves with good self-management, so avoid getting overtired or stressed, having too much alcohol, taking illegal drugs, exercising excessively or becoming dehydrated. Moderate exercise, yoga, meditation, music or time relaxing with friends can be helpful.
6. **Have a 'Seizure Management Plan'** so that your family, friends, work or school know what to do if you have a seizure. This will help others understand what is happening so they can help you quickly.
7. **See a specialist** to get the best treatment for your condition. Your doctor may refer you to a pediatrician, neurologist or epileptologist who will look at your symptoms, order tests, prescribe the best medication for your type of seizure and provide reviews.
8. **Manage your risks** – take special care around fire, water, heights, operating machinery and driving. Vic Roads has strict rules about the length of time you need to be seizure-free before being allowed to drive and your doctor must complete a medical report. See www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/Home/Licensing/MedicalConditions/Epilepsy.htm.
9. **If travelling overseas** check that any medications are legal in the countries you are visiting. Take a letter from your doctor detailing your diagnosis, the contents of the medication, how much you will be taking and that it is for your own personal use, along with a copy of the prescriptions and keep the medication in its original packaging. Make sure you have enough prescriptions to cover the time you are away from home. For further information, download a copy of the brochure *Travelling Well* from smartraveller.gov.au/tips/travelwell.html.
10. **Get some support if you need it.** Most people with epilepsy lead full and happy lives but sometimes you or your family might need support, information or to just talk to someone. Each State and Territory in Australia has an epilepsy support agency. Contact 1300 852 853 or visit www.epilepsyaustralia.net.

For further information contact the Epilepsy Foundation of Victoria on 9805 9111 or the National Epilepsy Helpline 1300 852 853 for the cost of a local call, or visit www.epinet.org.au