

## 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. Have plenty of prescriptions on hand; use a pill box or container to take a few tablets with you in case you don't get home on time.
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.

Things to ask your doctor:

**What prescribed or over-the-counter medicines should I avoid?** Medicines such as anti-depressants, birth control, anti-clotting and cold/flu tablets can interact with epilepsy medication or lower seizure threshold.

**Are there any aromatherapy oils such as rosemary, sage and camphor that I should avoid?** These may bring on seizures in some people.

**What should I do if I forget to take a tablet?**

**How much alcohol or other drugs can I take with my medication?** Alternate alcohol with non-alcoholic drinks if it affects your epilepsy.

**What types of seizures will I have?**

**What are the side-effects of the epilepsy medication?**

3. **Know your triggers and try to manage them.** Not all people who have seizures know what triggers 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 the majority of people who have seizures are not aware when they having a seizure and do not remember what happens. 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 in a diary. You can use a small notebook or the online epilepsy diary from [www.epilepsy.com/seizurediary](http://www.epilepsy.com/seizurediary). Take it to each doctor's appointment as it will help you identify triggers and also see if your medication is working.
5. **Have a healthy, balanced lifestyle** so that you do not get overtired or stressed, have too much alcohol, take illegal drugs, exercise excessively or become dehydrated, as these are some things that can bring on a seizure. Like diabetes and asthma, people living with epilepsy can do a lot to help themselves with good self-management. You may need to adjust your lifestyle. Be aware that late nights, irregular hours and shift work may cause difficulty. Find out how to deal with stress. 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. You can download a plan from [www.chronicillness.org.au/invisible/epilepsy\\_c.htm](http://www.chronicillness.org.au/invisible/epilepsy_c.htm). You might consider wearing a medical I.D. necklace, sports band or bracelet or carrying an epilepsy I.D. card in your wallet. This will help others understand what is happening so they can help you quickly.

7. **See a specialist** as it is important to get the best treatment for your condition. Your doctor may refer you to a pediatrician, neurologist or epileptologist who will take a detailed history and description of your seizures and be able to look at your symptoms, order tests, prescribe the best medication for your type of seizure and provide reviews, as required. Always keep follow-up appointments and bring a list of questions or concerns with you.
8. **Manage your risks** as people who have seizures need to 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](http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/Home/Licensing/MedicalConditions/Epilepsy.htm).
9. **If travelling overseas** check that any medications you take with you are legal in the countries you are visiting or transiting. You can do this by contacting the relevant foreign embassy or consulate. See [protocol.dfat.gov.au](http://protocol.dfat.gov.au) for contact details. 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. Keep the letter with a copy of the doctor's prescription and keep the medication in its original packaging. Make sure you have enough prescriptions to cover the time you are away from home. Ask your doctor to confirm that your medication is available in the country you are visiting. For further information, download a copy of the brochure *Travelling Well* from [smartraveller.gov.au/tips/travelwell.html](http://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](http://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](http://www.epinet.org.au)