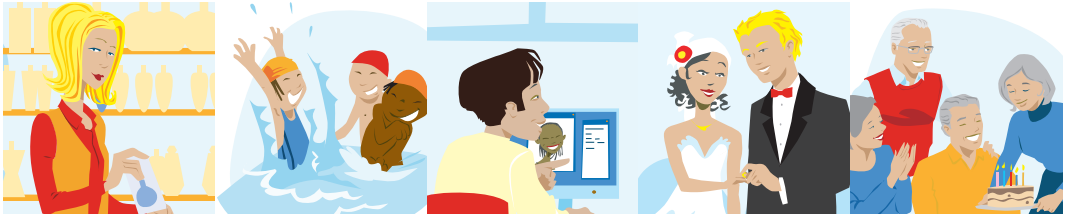


# Living Well With Epilepsy





- What is Epilepsy?
- Women and Epilepsy
- Elderly and Epilepsy
- Children, Adolescents and Epilepsy
- Epilepsy Diary & Information Booklet
  
- Baby Sitter Information
- Consultation Checklist
- My Epilepsy Information Card

## You can live well with Epilepsy...

**Epilepsy** is the most common disorder of the nervous system in the world and affects about 50 million people. However, in spite of the large numbers of people who have epilepsy, many people with the condition still face prejudice from others, often through lack of knowledge about what having epilepsy really means. Yet more people with epilepsy are realising they can live, work, have leisure occupations, enjoy normal relations and be active members of society if their seizures are well controlled.

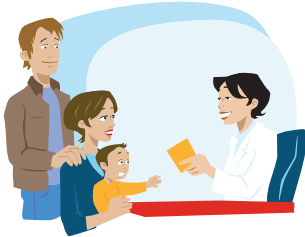
They are living proof that epilepsy, if managed well, does not have to stop the person from realising their goals in life.

Epilepsy is a disorder of the nervous system and not a mental illness.

- **Epilepsy** is repeated seizures during a certain period in a person's life (if you only have one seizure it is not epilepsy).
- **A seizure** is the result of a temporary disturbance to the brain's electrical activity. The number of seizures can vary from less than one a year to several times a day
- **Antiepileptic drugs** are used to re-establish the electrical balance of the brain. They can reduce or even suppress seizures.
- **Treatment** is not a random decision: the choice of treatment depends on your type of epilepsy, your response and tolerance to the medication. Only your doctor can establish the type of treatment and the correct dose for you.
- **Inform your doctor** about changes in your life or your reaction to treatment so that he or she can decide the best treatment option for you.

Although the vast majority of seizures do not cause accidents, their existence causes uncertainty and insecurity in people with epilepsy, their family and friends. A series of relatively simple recommendations are sufficient to reduce the risk of injury. It is important to follow this advice especially if you have seizures that are more frequent or severe.

# Managing your epilepsy



Just making some small changes to the way you manage your epilepsy, could make a significant improvement to your day-to-day quality of life. An “Epilepsy Diary” could be helpful to monitor your seizure control and check for any side effects so that you remember to talk with your doctor about them at your next visit. You can discuss with your doctor the best treatment options available for you, and possibility of stopping your seizures. Of course we can’t give you any guarantees, because everyone’s epilepsy is different and the way you respond will also be different to another person. Most importantly, you will have started to explore your treatment options together with your physician.

## Safety at Home

It’s great to be independent and to have a place of your own. Some simple precautions can make a big difference to your safety:

### Tips around the Home

- When cooking, use back burners on the hob and keep the handles of the pots facing to the back of the cooker
- Always put knives away inside drawers
- Always open the cold tap before opening the hot tap
- Try not to buy clothes/materials that require ironing at very high temperatures
- Use the shower (it’s also faster than taking a bath)
- Just like anyone else, when hanging pictures or changing light bulbs always use a stable ladder.

Use the hand rail when climbing up or down stairs

# Living a well-balanced life :

## Staying Healthy

Just like everyone, it is important you maintain a well-balanced lifestyle to keep your body healthy. Some simple tips to do so:

- Take time and pleasure in preparing good food for yourself, your family and friends
- Sleep well and try to limit your workload and stress
- Avoid stimulants such as coffee, alcohol and noise



## Keeping fit



Only certain high-risk sports are not advised if you have epilepsy (mountain climbing, paragliding, hang-gliding, diving etc). The majority of well-run leisure activities and sports are possible and highly recommended.

You will have many activities to choose from and will have the opportunity to meet new people. If your seizures are well controlled and you are able to tolerate your treatment there should not be any affect on your sporting performance.

## SOME SIMPLE CHECKS TO ENSURE YOU ARE SAFE:

- If swimming or playing water sports make sure you are with someone who knows about your epilepsy and what to do in case of a seizure
- Follow all safety recommendations: use a helmet when cycling and skiing, wear appropriate clothing, etc.

If in doubt about a particular sport, ask your doctor.

## Looking for Work :

Like everyone else, look for employment that corresponds to your professional qualifications as well as your aptitudes and preferences.

You can work with computers if the conditions are well managed.

- Computer screens are better at avoiding glare and reflections that may trigger a seizure
- Look at the possibility of fitting a filter to further reduce irritating reflections



At the pre-employment medical examination, talk to the occupational doctor about your epilepsy: the doctor will then decide if he/she can approve your application for the job. In France, the doctor is obliged to maintain professional secrecy, he or she will not inform the employer.

It is up to you to decide if or when to inform your employer or a close colleague about your epilepsy. Some people prefer that work colleagues know how to react in the event of a seizure.

The choice of who you tell at work is up to you, there are no legal obligations to do so.

Finally, the trial period is your chance to show your employer that you are able to adapt to the work and can manage the workload. Make sure you get enough sleep, eat well and try not to become too over-stressed.



# Travelling well



Travel is much easier if your epilepsy is well-controlled! Means of transport (plane, train or car) are not factors that aggravate epilepsy but may cause stress and or lack of sleep that could trigger a seizure.

## Some ideas to make your journey easier:

- Remember to take your antiepileptic medication at the right time.
- Take extra medication with you (enough for a longer period than the planned trip in case of unexpected events like a late departure)
- It may be useful to carry your Epilepsy Card explaining your condition and treatment (translated into English or into the language of the country you are visiting)
- Choose your destination well! Opt for a relaxing holiday “without too many adventures” in a country where the climate is not too hot



## Safe Driving :

The possibility for people with epilepsy to drive varies across countries. In some countries it is possible to drive if you have been seizure free for a specified period of time (e.g. 6 months or 1 year).

In France, you are able to drive if you have been seizure free for a year and with a favourable medical report.

If you have been judged fit to drive make sure to have regularly check-ups with your doctor and report any change in health to be sure that your driving licence remains valid. Even if you are not allowed to drive, don't be discouraged: as soon as your health improves you can reapply.



Safety precautions when driving are the same for you as for everyone:

- Don't drink and drive
- Don't drive if you are tired
- Avoid driving long distances
- Avoid driving at night



If you don't want to drive, if you've forgotten your antiepileptic medication or if you think a seizure might occur, leave the driving to someone else.

Lastly, if you are in the slightest doubt about driving, ask advice from your doctor.

## First Aid for Seizures :

Many people seeing someone having a seizure can be distressing because they do not know what to do. You may decide to explain to close friends or family members how they can help if you should have a seizure. This section can be used to explain simple first aid for seizures.

There are many different types of seizure. Most epileptic seizures last somewhere between a few seconds and a few minutes. These may be single and isolated or may occur in a series of seizures. In some seizures the person may lose consciousness and not be aware of what is happening.

After a seizure the person may be confused. Their confusion may last longer than the seizure itself and may be dangerous. Make sure the person when recovered, knows the day, where they are and where they are going next.

Most seizures are not medical emergencies. They usually end after a minute or two and do not require a trip to the Emergency Room. But sometimes there are good reasons to call for emergency help; a seizure in someone who does not have epilepsy could be a sign of a serious condition. Other reasons to call an ambulance include:

- A seizure that lasts longer than 5 minutes
- Slow recovery, a second seizure, or difficulty breathing afterwards
- If the person remains confused or not fully aware of their surroundings
- If the person is pregnant or has a medical condition
- If the person has any signs of injury or sickness



