



# TIPS

## for Coping With Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a chronic neurologic condition that causes recurring seizures. Seizures are episodes of disturbed brain activity that cause changes in attention or behavior. Being educated about epilepsy and following these tips can help you manage your condition successfully.

**Learn the four phases.** The phases of a seizure are the prodrome, aura, ictus, and postictal phase. The prodrome includes behaviors or feelings that occur hours to days before a seizure. The aura is the start of a seizure and may be thought of as a warning for a seizure. The ictus is the seizure event. The postictal phase is the recovery period after a seizure.

**Understand disease onset.** Epileptic seizures usually begin between ages 5 and 20. However, epileptic seizures can develop at any age. A family history of seizures or epilepsy is another factor that may influence whether you develop the disorder.

**Know the symptoms.** Symptoms of seizure can range from staring spells to violent shaking and loss of alertness. The type of seizure a person experiences depends on the part of the brain that is affected and the cause of epilepsy.

**Use a diary to track activity.** A diary should be used to record every time you have a seizure. You should be able to share it easily with your doctors, nurses, and other caregivers if needed. Also, seizure diaries should be available for others to write down what they observe.

**Help delay seizure onset.** There is no way to prevent epilepsy. Proper diet and sleep, and avoiding illegal drugs and alcohol can decrease the likelihood of triggering seizures in people with epilepsy.

**Treat depression.** Many people with epilepsy develop clinical depression at some point in their lives. Cognitive-behavioral therapy teaches patients to be cognizant of how thoughts influence mood. The technique can reduce the symptoms of depression and may reduce seizure severity.

**Put safety first.** A seizure can relax your muscles and can cause you to fall down unexpectedly, which may result in injury. It is best to think ahead in terms of safety. One way to do this is by carpeting the floors in your house or apartment with heavy pile and thick underpadding.

**Make adjustments in your diet.** Doctors recommend the ketogenic diet for children whose seizures have not responded to several seizure medicines. It is particularly recommended for children with Lennox-Gastaut syndrome. A modified Atkins diet may be used successfully in adults with epilepsy.

*This page is part of an ongoing series of practical tips for patients with neurologic disorders. If you have compiled clinically relevant tips that you wish to share, please contact the editor at [info@neurologyreviews.com](mailto:info@neurologyreviews.com).*

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