

What females of child bearing age should know

Some medication may affect the menstrual cycle or certain methods of contraception. This should be discussed with your doctor.

It is important to discuss medication before becoming pregnant or as early in a pregnancy as possible, as some medication can affect an unborn baby.

Always consult your doctor for advice before discontinuing your medication, as this may cause seizures; or increasing your dosage, as this may cause worsening of side effects.

What to do during seizures



Someone who has experienced a seizure should be taken to a doctor immediately.

Advice on how you can help a person during a seizure:

- Do ...**
- Remain calm and note the time
 - Clear a space around the person, prevent others from crowding around
 - Loosen tight clothing/neckwear. Remove spectacles.
 - Cushion the head to prevent injury
 - Assist the person into a comfortable position for when they recover
 - Wipe away excess saliva to facilitate breathing
 - Reassure and assist until person has recovered or become re-orientated
 - Allow the person to rest/sleep if necessary – cover with a blanket
 - Note the duration of the seizure. Provide this information to the person who had the seizure after they have recovered fully, in order for him/her to record the information in his/her seizure diary.

Do not ...

- Restrict or restrain the person's movement
- Move the person unless the person might hurt him/herself or is in immediate danger (e.g. in a busy road)
- Put anything between the person's teeth or in the person's mouth
- Give anything to eat or drink during the seizure
- Give extra medication, unless stipulated to do so by the doctor

How can you improve your medication compliance?

- Keep a special medication container (you can buy these in a pharmacy) in which your tablets have been put out correctly for the day/week.
- Keep a medication / seizure diary
- Keep a prescription refill reminder in a place where you can see it
- Ask your doctor to explain how the medication should be taken

Always take your medication as directed by your doctor or pharmacist.

This information is brought to you by Novartis in association with Epilepsy South Africa and the National Society for Epilepsy in the interest of Epilepsy education.



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Do you or a loved one have epilepsy?

Please read further ...

My epilepsy doesn't control me, I control it



Epilepsy



Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a physical condition characterised by unusual electrical activity in the brain. It is a neurological disorder, not a disease. It is neither a mental illness, nor is it contagious. It affects males and females of all ages, races, levels of intelligence and social backgrounds.

What causes epilepsy?

In approximately 66 % of cases, the underlying cause of the epilepsy is unknown. In the rest of the cases, the underlying cause can be identified. Some examples include head injury, lack of oxygen during birth, infections (e.g. meningitis, encephalitis), brain haemorrhage, strokes, tumours, alcohol and drug abuse, getting older and metabolic or biochemical disturbances.

Medication for epilepsy

There is no cure for epilepsy. Anti-Epileptic Drugs (AEDs) help control the seizures. Do not stop taking your medication when the seizures stop. It is important to always take your medication as prescribed by your doctor and directed by your pharmacist. Only change or stop if your doctor advises you to do so. The majority of people (up to 80 %) have their epilepsy controlled with epilepsy medication. Keep a seizure diary, to help your doctor assess your condition.

What is compliance?

It is the readiness with which you cooperate with the diagnostic and therapeutic measures. Non-compliance is when you are not taking the correct dosage of medication or not taking the medication at the correct intervals or duration specified. It is also when you are taking other non-recommended medication.

What causes non-compliance?

In some circumstances patients want to comply with the prescribed diagnostic and therapeutic measures, but experience barriers. These barriers include:

- Lack of financial resources to visit the doctor or clinic
- Poor patient education
- Complex dosing regimens
- Side effects of medication
- The patient experiences infrequent seizures and does not think that medication is needed
- Fear of dependency

Depending on what has been prescribed, taking your dose before or after a meal may help the medication be better absorbed into the body.

Why is it important that you should comply with taking your medication?

Epileptic seizures occur when ordinary brain activity is interrupted for a short time. Medication that acts on the brain to stop seizures from occurring does not treat the underlying cause of epilepsy and therefore does not “cure” epilepsy.

Compliance with medication minimises fluctuations in medication blood concentrations. This helps reduce the risk of seizures.

Things you should know about your medication

All medication can cause side effects. Because epilepsy medication acts on the brain, side effects such as drowsiness and unsteadiness are sometimes experienced. Whether side effects occur or not depends on each person's individual reaction to the medication.

Sometimes side effects are experienced when the medication is taken for the first time, or as the dose is increased. This usually goes away after a few days.

The risk of having these side effects can be reduced by keeping the drug plan as simple as possible.

How to recognise, and what to do when experiencing side effects

Recognising side effects in babies and young children can be difficult as they are unable to express their feelings. If your child feels unwell and is not able to tell you, their behaviour may change.

For teenagers, some side effects can be an issue. For example, medication that causes weight gain or acne, can affect self-esteem. Some medication can affect concentration, which could cause difficulties at school. Side effects or the possibility thereof, may mean some teenagers do not want to take their medication.

If you or your child are concerned about side effects, it may be helpful to discuss this with your doctor.