

Seizures: Tips for Teens

As a teenager, it is important to keep your body healthy.

- Eat 3 balanced meals each day.
- Get regular exercise. You can do this by playing sports or any fun activity. Talk with your doctor or nurse about physical activity.
- Get a full night's sleep. You should get at least 8 to 10 hours of sleep.
- Avoid caffeine close to bedtime. Caffeine may make it harder to get a good night's sleep. Keep in mind that chocolate, many sodas and teas, and anything made with coffee has caffeine in it.
- Get enough calcium. Eat dairy products or take supplements to help. Talk with your doctor about how much calcium you need.
 - Be sure the calcium supplements you take have vitamin D in them.
 - Do not take calcium supplements all at one time. Calcium works better if only one pill is taken at a time.
 - Some medicines should not be taken at the same time as calcium. Check with your pharmacist to see if you need to take your medicine and calcium at different times.
- Do not drink alcohol or take street drugs. These can increase the chance of more seizures. Alcohol and street drugs may also keep your seizure medicine from working the way they should.
- In Wisconsin, driving is allowed if you:
 - are seizure free for 3 months, **and**
 - take your seizure medicine every day as directed.

You will need to fill out a form from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) every 6 months. You will need to see your doctor within 30 days of filling out the DMV form.

Don't forget to plan ahead!

Female teens

- As you start to develop, you will notice body changes. When you notice these changes, talk with your doctor or nurse about how your seizures might change when you start your period.
- Teenage girls with epilepsy should take folic acid every day. Talk with your doctor about how much you should take. Some girls with epilepsy need to take more folic acid before getting pregnant and during the first 3 months of pregnancy. It is very important to talk with your doctor as soon as you are thinking of getting pregnant.

- Girls with epilepsy may not ovulate during some of their periods. This means that some periods will be irregular. Talk with your doctor or nurse if this happens.
- Birth control pills (oral contraceptives)
 - Some birth control pills can make seizures worse and some can make them better. Call your neurologist before you start birth control pills. Talk about how it might affect your seizures.
 - Birth control pills and seizure medicines can affect each other. Seizure medicine may make birth control pills not work as well. This could cause bleeding between periods and may **not** prevent pregnancy. Ask your primary care doctor or gynecologist if an extra form of birth control is needed.

As a teenager, you need to prepare for the transition to being an adult. These things can help with the process:

- Take part in your clinic visits without your parent. Your parent can join at the end of the visit to ask any questions and listen to the plan of care.
- Keep a record of your medical information. Use a binder, folder or file box to organize papers. Keep copies of clinic notes, seizure records, medicine lists, care plans, test results, appointments and important phone numbers. You may wish to program your doctors' phone numbers into your cell phone.
- Call the pharmacy for your medicine refills. Please remember to plan ahead for these!

This information was adapted from materials available through the Wisconsin Seizure Control Network.

This teaching sheet is meant to help you care for your child. It does not take the place of medical care. Talk with your healthcare provider for diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up.