

SPECIAL LIFESTYLE FACTORS FOR TEENS WITH EPILEPSY

As a teenager, you have some special things to consider to keep your body healthy and enjoy a safe fulfilling life:

- Eat 3 well-balanced meals every day.
- Get regular exercise to keep your body healthy. Being involved in planned sports or any fun activities are good ways to get exercise. Talk with your doctor or nurse about taking part in physical activity.
- Get a full night's sleep. You should get at least 8-10 hours of sleep. Avoid caffeine since this may make it harder to get a good night's sleep.
- Get enough calcium and vitamin D from dairy products or calcium supplements.
 Check with your doctor about the amount of calcium you should take every day.
 - When using a calcium supplement, be sure that it contains Vitamin D.
 - When taking a calcium supplement don't take them all at the same time.
 Calcium is absorbed better if no more than one pill is taken at 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.
- Avoid alcohol and street drugs since these can make seizures more likely to occur. Alcohol and street drugs may also interfere with how well your antiseizure medicine works.
- Driving is allowed if you are seizure free for 3 months (in the state of Wisconsin) and if you take your antiepileptic medication every day as directed. A form from the DMV (Department of Motor Vehicles) needs to be completed every 6 months. You will need to have seen your doctor within 30 days of completing the DMV form.

For Female Teens:

- Seizure frequency and severity may vary with your period. When you notice body changes that are part of developing into an adult, talk with your doctor or nurse about the possible changes in your seizures that may occur when you start your period.
- Females with epilepsy should take folic acid every day starting as a teenager.
 Check with your doctor about the amount of folic acid you should take every day.
 Since some females with epilepsy need to take more folic acid before becoming 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.



- Females with epilepsy may not ovulate during some of their periods causing their periods to be irregular. Talk with your doctor or nurse if you notice that your periods are irregular.
- Oral contraceptives ("birth control pills"):
 - Oral contraceptives and seizure medicines can affect each other. You will need to make an appointment with your primary care doctor or gynecologist because your antiepileptic medication can make your oral contraceptive not work as well. This may cause breakthrough bleeding and may not prevent pregnancy. Some other form of birth control may be need to be used.
 - Some oral contraceptives can make seizures worse and some can make seizures better. Call your neurologist before you start an oral contraceptive to talk about how it might affect your seizures.

As a teenager, you need to begin to get ready for the transition to being adult. Here are some things that you can start to do to help with this process:

- Take part in your clinic appointments without your parent present. Your parent can join the visit at the end to ask any questions and listen to the plan of care.
- Begin to call the pharmacy to request refills for your medicines.
- Keep a record of your medical information. Use a binder, folder or file box to organize your clinic notes, seizure records, care plans, test results, appointments, phone numbers, etc.