

## You're in charge of living well with epilepsy



The teenage years are an exciting time in life full of changes and growth. It's a time when you're juggling school and social activities, making new friendships, and gaining a new sense of independence. It's also an important time to make sure you're doing the best you can to take charge of building healthy habits to help keep your seizures in check.

In this guide, you'll find some tips to help you live well with epilepsy. While this is a guide, remember to always talk with your doctor and ask for their expert advice on how to best manage your epilepsy.

### Stay on top of your medication schedule

Be sure to **take your epilepsy medication exactly as instructed by your doctor**. For many people with epilepsy, medicine is the first and most important step to help keep seizures from coming back and keep epilepsy under control.<sup>1</sup> Do your best to not miss a dose even when you're feeling fine. Talk with your doctor to learn about the risks of missing or stopping medication.



### Write it down

**Keep a seizure journal** so that you, your parents, and your doctor can understand how well your seizures are staying under control.

Check out the **Nile app** (recommended by the Epilepsy Foundation) which you can use to keep track of your medication schedule, discover what types of activities might cause you to have a seizure, find reminders to take your medicine, and more.



Scan to see the Nile app

## Get your rest

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Try to get good sleep regularly. The National Sleep Foundation recommends at least 8 hours of sleep every night for teens 14 to 17 years of age.<sup>2</sup> Talk with your doctor and nurses about the risks of not getting enough sleep and how it can affect seizures.



## Share with your friends

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Sometimes it may not be easy to talk about epilepsy, but it's important to make sure your close friends know about your condition, so they know how to help you right away in case you have a seizure. Your close friends are on your side and care deeply for your well-being.



### Some helpful information to share with your friends:

1. What types of activities might cause you to have a seizure
2. How many minutes your seizures typically last
3. What to look out for when you're having a seizure and what they can do to help you stay safe
4. Whether you feel anything unusual before a seizure happens

## Make sure others are alerted

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When you go out, it's always a good idea to wear your epilepsy alert bracelet. This will help make sure that people around you and emergency medical responders quickly know you have epilepsy and give you the right type of care in case you have a seizure.



## Ask yourself “how do I feel?”

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Sometimes dealing with the **ups and downs of epilepsy** can feel like too much. This can happen to anyone living with epilepsy and these feelings are perfectly understandable. But it's important to figure out if these feelings are impacting your life in a negative way.



**If you've been feeling these emotions more often than usual, be sure to bring it up with your doctor as soon as possible<sup>3-7</sup>:**

- Feeling isolated from your friends
- Feeling that you're easily upset or irritated
- Feeling that it's very difficult to focus or concentrate
- Feeling unusual pain or aches in your body
- Feeling that you don't care about activities that you once liked
- Feeling like you're not good at anything
- Feeling like you want to harm yourself



Having epilepsy doesn't mean you should expect to feel down. But if you do have feelings of being very unhappy or sad, you are not alone. In fact, 1 in 4 teens with epilepsy have had feelings of being depressed.<sup>3,8</sup> Your doctor and nurses can help you feel better, so be sure to let them know if you've been feeling really down.

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If you have thoughts of suicide, call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** right away: **1-800-273-8255**. They are available anytime, day or night.

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Scan to start a Lifeline Chat

## Drive with the rules in mind

One of the best parts of becoming an older teen is learning to drive a car. Of course, with that comes the responsibility of being a safe driver. As someone living with epilepsy, it's very important for you to know and understand your state's driving laws and your ability to have a driver's license. For example, if you have a seizure, the law may require you to stop driving for a while. This is to help protect you, other people riding in your car, and other drivers on the road from getting hurt. Get to know the laws, so you don't risk losing your license that you worked hard to earn.



The laws are different for each state, so be sure to know your state's driving laws required for people with epilepsy.<sup>9</sup>



◀ Scan to find the driving laws in your state

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**References:** 1. Epilepsy Foundation. Seizure Medicines. Accessed May 9, 2022. <https://www.epilepsy.com/treatment/medicines#Medicine-Is-The-Most-Common-Way-Of-Treating-Epilepsy-And-Is-Almost-Always-The-First-Treatment-Tried> 2. Hirshkowitz M, Whiton K, Albert SM, et al. National Sleep Foundation's updated sleep duration recommendations: final report. *Sleep Health*. 2015;1(4):233–243. 3. Ettinger AB, Weisbrot DM, Nolan EE, et al. Symptoms of depression and anxiety in pediatric epilepsy patients. *Epilepsia*. 1998;39(6):595–599. 4. Plioplys S. Depression in children and adolescents with epilepsy. *Epil Behav*. 2003;4:S39–S45. 5. Suicide Prevention. Signs and symptoms of youth depression. Accessed May 31, 2022. <https://suicideprevention.nv.gov/Youth/Depression/> 6. Mental Health America. Depression in Teens. Accessed May 31, 2022. <https://www.mhanational.org/depression-teens-0> 7. American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry. Depression in children and teens. Accessed May 31, 2022. [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families\\_and\\_Youth/Facts\\_for\\_Families/FFF-Guide/The-Depressed-Child-004.aspx](https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/The-Depressed-Child-004.aspx) 8. Wagner JL, Kellerman T, Mueller M et al. Development and validation of the NDDI-E-Y: a screening tool for depressive symptoms in pediatric epilepsy. *Epilepsia*. 2016;57(8):1265–1270. 9. Epilepsy Foundation. Driving Laws. Accessed May 13, 2022. <https://www.epilepsy.com/lifestyle/driving-and-transportation/laws>