



Rockland County Office

450 West Nyack Road
West Nyack, NY 10994
(845) 627-0627
1-800-640-0371

www.learnaboutepilepsy.com



For more information on epilepsy, check out:
www.learnaboutepilepsy.com
(includes local information),
www.epilepsy.com, www.efa.org,
your local epilepsy center's website, or the many links available on those websites.

This pamphlet was made possible through a grant from the-



To help us to continue to provide educational materials, donations can be made at our website:
www.learnaboutepilepsy.com

Managing Your Seizures at College



Tips on College and Epilepsy

Starting college can be a fun and exciting time but one that also can be challenging for people with epilepsy. This pamphlet is designed to give you an overview of helpful hints with the goal of making this transition a little smoother and safer.

First, the bad news: remember that seizures are not just inconvenient, but can be dangerous. They can lead to car accidents, drowning, broken bones, dislocated shoulders, head injury, burns and even sudden death on rare occasions, particularly with poorly controlled convulsive seizures. Those with epilepsy usually need to have a higher degree of responsibility for their actions, especially related to sleep and alcohol, than those without epilepsy.

Now, the good news: most people with epilepsy can control their seizures with medications and by avoiding situations that will make them more likely to have seizures. Many of these situations are discussed below. In addition, those who still have seizures can often function extremely well and remain safe with proper precautions.

- ★ Design a plan with your doctor for what to do if you have a seizure, cluster of seizures, or prolonged seizures. It may make sense to outline this in writing so some of the key people at your school are aware (roommate, school nurse or physician). Most seizures are self limiting and last only 1-2 minutes, but it is good to have a plan if needed.
- ★ Keep an adequate supply of your medication available and know the phone number to a local pharmacy. Plan on how you will get your medications refilled before starting school. This is especially important if you are going away to school. The most common reason for breakthrough seizures is missed medications.
- ★ Schedules can change and thinking of a specific reminder for taking medications consistently is important. For example, make it part of your routine such as after brushing your teeth in the morning and at night. Use a pill box with the medication to be taken that day or set an alarm on your watch or cell phone.
- ★ Take care of yourself and get enough rest. Making sure you are eating well and keeping a consistent sleep schedule can help to minimize seizures. Some individuals are more sensitive to sleep deprivation than others. Getting on a schedule that allows you a good amount of sleep can be key. Sometimes it may require taking classes a little later in the day to allow extra sleep in the morning. Some people may do better rooming on their own to avoid disturbances in sleep.
- ★ Managing stress is important as school work and changing living environments can be added pressure. Figure out techniques that can lower stress such as taking a break with friends, listening to music, or going to the gym.

- ★ Some general household safety precautions that are worth mentioning include: Never lock your bathroom door, take showers instead of baths, use the back burners if cooking to avoid accidental burns, use shatterproof containers as much as possible, avoid climbing ladders or high places, and don't sleep on the top bunk. Most sports and activities can be enjoyed with a few extra precautions. If your health care provider has deemed it safe for you to swim, never swim alone, always go with someone who knows you have seizures or inform the lifeguard. Do not get into a whirlpool or hot tub alone. When in a gym it is best to avoid free weights and the treadmill. Check with your health care provider about specific activities you have questions about. In terms of driving, it is not safe and against DMV guidelines to drive with uncontrolled seizures. Talk to your healthcare provider about whether it is safe for you to drive. When using public transportation, do not stand near the edge of the train platform or sidewalk.
- ★ Reporting your condition to the disability office at school is a personal choice. If you are having problems, informing the teacher about your epilepsy may help allow special considerations that could benefit your school performance. For example, there can be some flexibility in terms of allowing more time for assignments and test taking if needed, or if you have a seizure on the day of the test you can arrange to take the test at a later time.
- ★ Social situations can sometimes involve alcohol. Alcohol can alter the seizure threshold and put an individual at greater risk for having a seizure (typically the next day, not when drinking). Drinking alcohol and sleep deprivation are a particularly dangerous combination. For some it may be best to avoid alcohol completely.
- ★ When studying be sure to set enough time aside, find a quiet place, make a list of priorities, and stay organized. Make an appointment to meet with the professor if you're having some difficulty. Most of the time they will be willing to help.
- ★ Some pharmaceutical companies such as UCB (www.ucbepilepsyscholarship.com) and Pfizer (www.epilepsyscholarship.com) provide college scholarships for selected students with epilepsy. It is a good way to earn extra money for school and tell your own personal story.
- ★ Talk with your doctor or nurse. Be sure to keep the lines of communication open and don't hesitate to call if you have concerns, need some guidance, or any issues with seizures. They are there to help you.

School can be hard at times for anyone, not just those with seizures, but it can also be a great experience. Have fun and don't get discouraged!

