CPNI
Cyprus Paediatric Neurology Institute
Παιδονευρολογικό Ινστιτούτο Κύπρου

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Epilepsy and everyday life

Epilepsy means a tendency to have repeated seizures, caused by brief bursts of electrical activity in the brain. There are many different types, so the epilepsy, the treatment and the outlook are different for every child. Epilepsy can start at any age, most often in childhood.

1 in 100–200

people have epilepsy. It is one of the most common conditions of the brain.

7 in 10

people can have their seizures controlled with medicine.

A full life

Most children with epilepsy go to school, play sport and grow up to live normal lives.

Taking medicine every day

Taking the medicine regularly is the most important thing you can do to prevent seizures. Do not miss doses, and never stop a medicine suddenly without talking to your doctor.

- ✓ Fill a weekly pill box.
- ✓ Leave a reminder note where you will see it.
- ✓ Set an alarm or reminder on your phone.
- ✓ Renew the prescription in good time, before the medicine runs out.

Missed or vomited doses

- ✓ If a dose is missed, give it as soon as you remember.
- ✓ If your child vomits within 30 minutes of taking a dose, give the dose again.
- ✓ Always check your doctor’s instructions: some medicines are more sensitive to missed doses than others.

What can trigger a seizure?

Not everyone has triggers, but these are the common ones:

- Missed medicine
- Too little sleep
- Illness and fever
- Skipped meals
- Stress and worry
- Alcohol
- Flashing lights
- Periods (hormonal changes)

Only about 3 in 100 people with epilepsy are sensitive to flashing lights. A seizure diary helps you and your doctor to spot patterns.

If a seizure with shaking happens: what to do

1. Stay calm and note the time.
2. Lay the child on the floor, put something soft under the head and move hard objects away.
3. Loosen tight clothing around the neck.
4. When the shaking stops, turn the child onto their side (recovery position).
5. Stay close and reassure them until they are fully awake.

What not to do

- Do not put anything in the mouth.
- Do not hold the child down or try to stop the movements.
- Do not give food, drink or tablets until fully awake.

Tip: if it is safe, film the seizure on your phone. It helps the doctor a great deal.

Call 112 if

- the seizure lasts 5 minutes or more (give the rescue medicine as written in your child's plan)
- another seizure follows before the child has recovered
- it is the first seizure
- the child is injured, has trouble breathing, or the seizure happened in water

Epilepsy is nobody's fault

Epilepsy is not contagious, it is not a mental illness and it is nobody's fault. Talking about it openly, at home, at school and with friends, is the best way to fight stigma.

Safe at home

A few simple changes lower the risk of injury if a seizure happens.

In the bathroom

- Choose a shower instead of a bath. If you do fill the bath, use only a little water.
- Do not lock the bathroom door.
- Never leave a young child alone in the bath.
- Fit a thermostat so that the water cannot scald.

In the kitchen (older children and teenagers who cook)

- Use a microwave or an electric hob instead of a gas flame.
- Wear oven gloves, and use a trolley to carry hot dishes.
- Choose plastic dishes and cups instead of glass.
- A rug or soft flooring softens a fall.

Family life, routine and screens

- Keep a steady daily routine, with enough sleep and regular meals.
- Keep the same clear rules and limits as for brothers and sisters. Overprotecting a child does more harm than good.
- Video games do not cause epilepsy and are fine for most children. Take breaks, play in a well-lit room and stop when tired.

Sport and physical activity

Children with epilepsy can and should take part in sport. Exercise builds confidence, friendships and health, and does not usually make seizures worse. Ask your doctor before starting a new activity, drink plenty of water and avoid getting too hot.

Go ahead

Running and athletics, football, basketball and other team sports, tennis, dance, school PE. Contact sports are allowed; after a new diagnosis, wait until the pattern of seizures is clear.

With protection or supervision

Swimming and water sports (always with a capable adult watching closely; a life jacket in open water). Cycling, skating, skateboarding, skiing (helmet). Horse riding (helmet and supervision). Gymnastics (avoid bars, rings and equipment at height).

Avoid while seizures are not controlled

Swimming without supervision, scuba diving, climbing at height, parachuting, hang-gliding, bungee jumping, motor sports.

At school

- It is a good idea to tell the teachers about the diagnosis.
- Give the school a written seizure plan: what a seizure looks like, what to do and who to call. Our school epilepsy care plan can help.
- Tell them about the medicines, any changes, and side effects such as sleepiness.
- Agree how medicine, or rescue medicine, will be given at school if it is needed.
- Ask for help with learning, or extra time in exams, if your child needs it.
- A class talk about epilepsy helps classmates to understand, if your child agrees.

Teenagers

- Friends: honesty is the best approach. Tell a few good friends and show them what to do if you have a seizure.
- Alcohol, drugs and late nights make seizures more likely.
- Independence: gradually take charge of your own medicines and appointments.
- Driving: the law requires a period without seizures before you can drive. In the EU this is usually 12 months (6 months after a single first seizure). Ask your doctor.
- Support: ask us about support groups and patient associations. Parents can also ask about any benefits the family may be entitled to.

Contact CPNI

If you have questions or would like an appointment, please call our office on +357 22 476 627 or email cpni2007@gmail.com.

More leaflets and information: www.cpni.com.cy

This leaflet gives general information. It does not replace advice from your child's doctor.

Reviewed by Dr Paola Nicolaides, Consultant Paediatric Neurologist, November 2026.

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