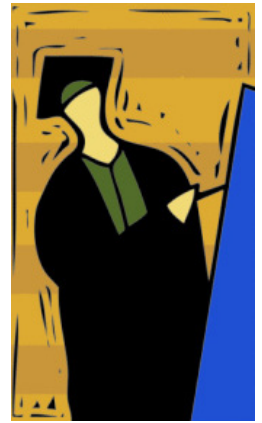


College Tips and Epilepsy

Starting college can be a fun and exciting time but one that also can be challenging for people with epilepsy. This sheet 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.



1. Come up with a plan with your doctor about what to do in the event of a seizure, cluster of seizures or prolonged seizure. It may make sense to outline this in writing so some of the key people at your school are aware (roommate, school nurse/physician) Most seizures are self limiting and only last 1-2 minutes, but it is good to have a plan if needed.
2. Keep an adequate supply of your medication available and know the number to a local pharmacy in the area. This is especially important if you are living away at school. The most common reason for breakthrough seizures is missed medication.
3. **Remember to take your medication.** 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. It may make sense to carry an extra dose with you in case you forget to take it before you leave.
4. 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 your 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.
5. **Relax.** Managing stress is important as school work 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.
6. 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 safely 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, 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.
7. Reporting your condition to the disability office at school is a personal choice. If you are having problems, informing the teacher about your epilepsy condition 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 taking tests and completing assignments if needed.
8. 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.
9. When studying be sure to set aside enough time, find a quiet place, make a list of priorities, and stay organized. Make an appointment to meet with your professor if you're having difficulty, most likely they will be willing to help.
10. Both pharmaceutical companies UCB www.ucbepilepsyscholarship.com and Pfizer www.epilepsyscholarship.com provide college scholarships for some students with epilepsy. It is a good way to earn extra money for school and tell your own personal story.
11. 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 if there are any issues related to seizures. They are there to help you.

Have fun and don't get discouraged.

School can be hard at times for anyone, but it can also be a great experience.

You can also find this information on the website for the Epilepsy Society of Southern New York, Inc. www.learnaboutepilepsy.com