



KNOW ME  
SUPPORT ME

# Learning about epilepsy

An easy English guide

# Seizures

## What is epilepsy?

The messages in your brain get all mixed up for a short time.

This is called a seizure. They used to be called fits.

Your body does strange things or feels strange.

## What seizures could I have?

People have different seizures.

For example, you might



- walk around and talk to yourself



- feel scared, sick or worried in your stomach



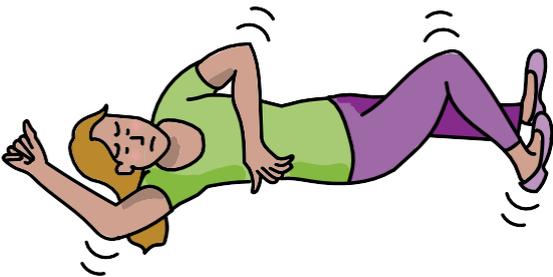
- chew or lip-smack



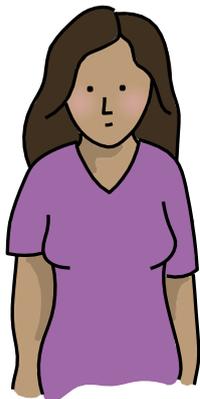
- play with your clothes



- go stiff



- fall over and shake, this is called a tonic-clonic seizure



- stare.

Some people have seizures when they are

- awake
- asleep.

Some people have seizures every day.

Some people only have a seizure sometimes.

## Can I stop my seizure?

No.

## Will I know the seizure is coming?

Some people know when a seizure is coming.

For example, they might



- have a strange taste



- have a strange smell



- feel sick



- feel worried.

## Why do I feel funny after a seizure?

The messages in your brain get all mixed up for a short time.

You may feel



- tired and sleepy



- confused



- angry.

If you can, tell someone you have had a seizure.

After a rest you may feel better.

## How do I feel?



Some people with epilepsy can get sad or worried.

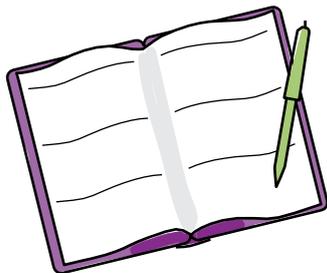
This can be part of having epilepsy.

Always talk to your doctor about how you feel.

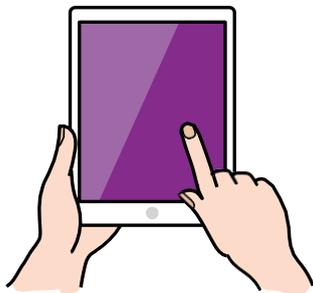
# How can I tell people about my epilepsy?

If you know a seizure is coming, tell people.

Make notes about your seizures. For example, use



- a diary



- mobile phone and iPad apps



- a Seizure Management Plan

You can say how you want help in this Plan.

Visit your doctor about your epilepsy one time every year, or sooner if you have more seizures.



Use the My Epilepsy Medical Review document to get ready for your visit.

The doctor will:

- check your health
- say what medication to take.

# Medication

## Do I have to take medication?



Yes. Take your medication every day.

Most people take medication in the morning and at night.

Do not forget.



If you forget talk to your chemist or doctor.

You may need emergency medication to stop a seizure.

Your doctor can talk to you about this.

## What side effects might I feel from my medication?



- stomach ache



- tired



- feeling sad



- angry



- staying awake at night



- put on or lose weight.



If you get a rash on your skin from new medication, you **must** tell your doctor quickly.

Tell your doctor about how your medication makes you feel.

## Seizure triggers

A trigger is something that might bring on a seizure.

What might trigger a seizure?

If you



- miss your seizure medication



- are sick or hot



- drink too much alcohol

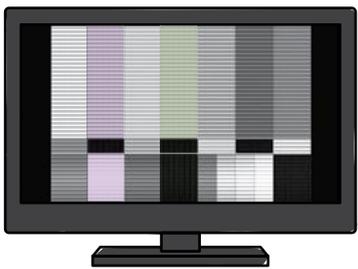
If you



- don't get enough sleep



- get angry



- see flashing lights or flickering television screens



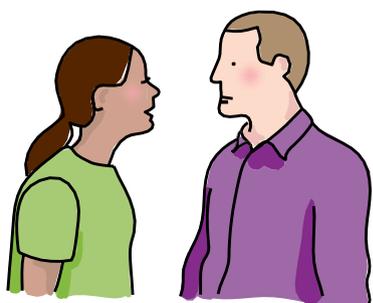
- for women it may be before or during your period.

# Safety

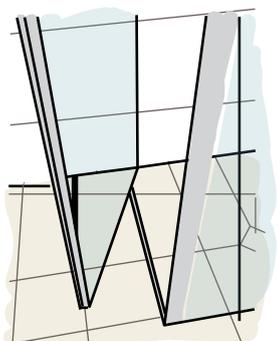
## How can I be safe in the bathroom?



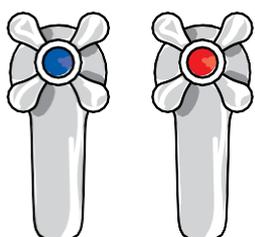
- have showers not baths



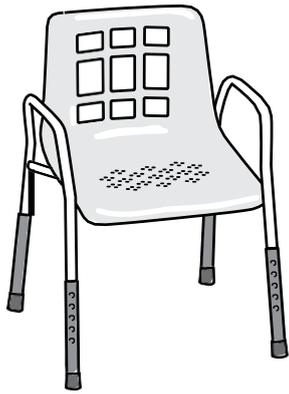
- tell someone before you shower



- have a shower door that opens out, not in



- fit a temperature control for your hot water



- use a shower chair if your seizures make you fall.

## How can I be safe at home and in the community?

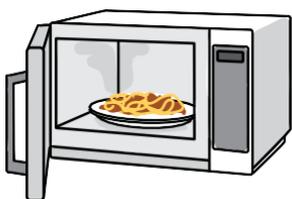
You can do the things you like. To stay safe, you can



- wear a helmet when you ride a bike AND ride with another person



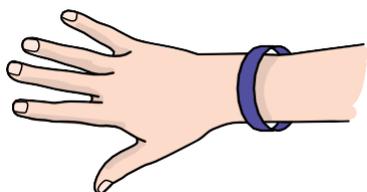
- swim with another person AND tell the lifeguard you have epilepsy



- ask someone to help you with safe cooking ideas
- use a microwave instead of a stovetop and a food processor rather than a knife



- wait for a train or tram behind the yellow line, or wait for a bus away from the road



- keep your personal emergency information on you.

## Can I die from epilepsy?

A very small number of people can die from a seizure.

Look after yourself

- visit your doctor regularly
- take your medication
- do not miss medication
- make notes about your seizures.
- give your notes to the doctor
- be safe.

# Can I get a job?

Yes.

All people in the workplace need to be safe.

Some jobs may not be safe for you to do.

There are support services that can help you get or keep your job.

Call the Epilepsy Information Line 1300 761 487 for more information.

## Seizure Management Plan



What is a Seizure Management Plan?

It has information about:

- a person's seizures
- how to help the person
- when to call an ambulance.

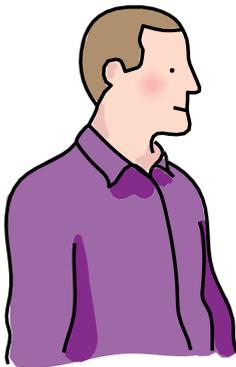
Your support person can use the booklet *Developing a Seizure Management Plan* to help you have your say in your Plan.

# Help

## Where can I get more help?



- your doctor



- your family, carer or support worker



- Epilepsy New Zealand 0800 37 45 37.

Other resources you can get from <http://epilepsy.org.nz/>



- Seizure First Aid poster



- *Developing a Seizure Management Plan for support workers*



- *My Epilepsy Medical Review Appointment document*



*Seizure Management Plan and  
Emergency Medication Plan  
(midazolam or rectal valium)*

# Words in this book

## Community

A group of people who live in the same area or like doing the same things

## Epilepsy

People who have epilepsy have seizures

## Home

Where people live, keep things and sleep

## Job

Work people do, sometimes for money

## Medication

Medicine that a doctor gives to people

## Safety

When you are safe and okay. When things can't hurt you

## Seizures

The messages in your brain get all mixed up for a short time

## Side effects

When medication makes you feel unwell

## Trigger

Something that can make a seizure happen



**EPILEPSY**  
**NEW ZEALAND**  
*Kia titiro ki te tangata / See the person*

### *National Support Centre*

Epilepsy House, 6 Vialou Street, Hamilton  
Central, Hamilton 3204  
PO Box 1074, Hamilton 3240  
Phone: 07 834 3556  
Email: [national@epilepsy.org.nz](mailto:national@epilepsy.org.nz)

This publication is part of a suite of resources for people living with epilepsy and a cognitive disability, and all those who support them.

The information contained in this publication provides general information about epilepsy. It does not provide specific advice.

Specific health and medical advice should always be obtained from an appropriately qualified health professional. Readers should not act on the basis of any material in the book without obtaining advice relevant to their own particular situations.

The authors, editor and publisher expressly disclaim any liability to any person in respect of any action taken or not taken in reliance on the contents of this publication.