

Life Stages[®]
For Adults With Epilepsy





Q&A Common Questions

Your Medicines

Make sure your primary-care team knows about your seizure diagnosis and any seizure medicines you take.

What do I need to know about my medicines?

Learn about your medicines and take proper precautions.

- Work with your neurology care team to make sure you understand dosage instructions, including what to do if you miss a dose.
- Know each medicine's potential side effects and what to do if they occur.
- Never stop taking a seizure medicine abruptly. If you don't like the way you are responding to a medicine, talk with your neurology care team.
- Keep a record of antiepileptic medicines you have used in the past, and note which ones worked or didn't work for you.
- Know the name and phone number for your pharmacy and how to get timely medicine refills.

Staying Safe

Whether you live in a college dorm, at a group home, with your parents, or on your own, you need a plan for staying safe.

What should I do if a seizure occurs?

Your neurology care team will help you create an emergency plan for seizures. Share the plan with the people who spend time with you.

The plan should explain what to do if:

- The seizure is typical and lasts a short time
- The seizure lasts longer than usual
- You have repetitive or cluster seizures

When is it necessary to call for help?

Your neurology care team will help you create a list of circumstances during which to call:

- Your primary-care physician or nurse practitioner
- Your neurology care team
- 911 for an emergency response

Keep the list—including phone numbers—where you and others can find it quickly. Talk with your neurology care team about what to expect if you go to a hospital's emergency department.

Can I participate in sports and physical recreation?

Most people who have seizures can be physically active. Depending on the nature of your seizures, you might need restrictions. When using bikes, scooters, skates, skateboards and skis, always wear a helmet and protective equipment. If you sometimes lose consciousness or can't control your movements during seizures, avoid activities that could cause dangerous falls.

Will I be allowed to drive a car?

In most states, people can receive a driver's license if they've been free of seizures for a certain length of time (usually three to 12 months, depending on the state). If you have questions or concerns about driving, talk to a social worker or your state's department of transportation.

Informing Others

When people know that you have epilepsy, they're better able to support you and to respond appropriately in an emergency.

Who needs to know that I have epilepsy?

If you have seizures during the day, let people with whom you regularly spend time know about your epilepsy. If your seizures always happen when you sleep, you'll only need to tell your family or roommates. You also might want to talk with people you see socially and at work.

Does epilepsy affect friendships and dating?

Most people who have epilepsy develop healthy interpersonal relationships. You should share information about your seizures with your friends. If you worry about discussing your epilepsy, consider practicing what you want to say with a family member or counselor. Or provide your friends with written information about epilepsy and your seizure-management plan. Although sexual activity rarely causes seizures, some doctors prescribe Antivan (a preventive medicine) if they occur.

Staying Healthy

Eating a healthy diet and getting adequate sleep can help you control your seizures and decrease the risk of having more.

How can I keep my bones healthy?

Some seizure medicines might interfere with your body's ability to absorb and use calcium. Your health-care providers might recommend calcium supplements, bone-age testing and weight-bearing exercise or activities. Getting plenty of calcium through your diet also is a great way to minimize risks to your bones.

Some seizure medicines lower the levels of important vitamins and minerals in the body. Your health-care providers might recommend vitamin supplements. Talk with your health-care provider before taking any medicines or supplements on your own. Some of them could interfere with your epilepsy medicines or change your seizure activity.

Will alcohol or illegal drugs affect my seizures?

Alcohol and other drugs can cause seizures, even in people who don't have epilepsy. If you drink alcohol or use illegal drugs, the substances might trigger a rise in the number of seizures you have, make your seizures last longer, or increase their intensity.

How can I maintain good mental health and emotional well-being?

The risk of depression decreases if your seizures are well-controlled. If your emotions change after you start taking a new medicine, contact your neurology care team. If you feel anxious or depressed, talk with a

health-care professional. Talk with your family and friends and let them know how they can support you. In addition, activities such as massage, guided imagery, yoga and tai chi can help reduce stress and anxiety.

Work and School

Most people who have epilepsy do fine at work and in school. If seizures or side effects of medicines interfere with school, talk with a school counselor or a Gillette social worker about accommodations.

Will epilepsy affect my ability to work?

Before you apply for a job, speak to a social worker or vocational counselor about employment issues. If your seizures are well-controlled, you should be able to handle most jobs. If you are offered a job, let the employer know how, or if, your seizures might affect your ability to do your work.

The Americans with Disabilities Act makes it illegal to deny someone a job because of a medical condition, as long as that person can perform the duties of the job. Employers are required to make reasonable accommodations for a disability. You can get more information about epilepsy and legal rights from a social worker at Gillette Lifetime.

More Questions?

Call Gillette Telehealth Nursing at 651-229-3890 and ask to speak to one of our neurology nurses.

Today Eddie drives, works, lives independently and enjoys an active social life.



Life Stages® — For Adults With Epilepsy

Adults who have epilepsy often face concerns about independent living, safety, work, relationships and family planning.

Information to Keep on Hand

To help make sure that you receive proper health care, inform others about your medical condition. Keep the following materials in an easy-to-find location:

- Name(s) of your seizure type(s)
- Descriptions of how you might appear or behave during a seizure
- An emergency plan that tells other people what to do if you have a seizure
- A list of phone numbers to call if you need help
- Information about your medicines, including:
 - A complete list of medicines, with their names and dosages
 - What to do if you miss a dose
 - Potential side effects
 - What to do if side effects occur
- A calendar or checklist for tracking when you:
 - Have seizures
 - Take medicines
 - Experience side effects from medicines

On the cover: Eddie began having seizures after he sustained a traumatic brain injury.

At Gillette Lifetime Specialty Healthcare, we've created this brochure to address your questions and concerns.

What to Bring to Your Appointment

When you see your neurology care team, bring written observations about your seizures.

- Keep track of the dates, starting times and lengths of your seizures and of other incidents (periods of staring, for example) that you think might be seizures.
- Write down any circumstances (such as sickness or unusual fatigue) that you think might have triggered a seizure.
- Describe, in detail, behaviors that concern you, including:
 - Inability to tolerate prescribed medicines
 - Unexplained irritability
 - Inability to focus
 - Tremor or balance issues
 - Unexpected weight gain, weight loss or changes in appetite

Using a calendar to track your seizures might reveal important patterns. Your health-care providers can use that information when developing a care plan.

Our Mission

Gillette Children's Specialty Healthcare provides specialized health care for people who have short-term or long-term disabilities that began during childhood. We help children, adults and their families improve their health, achieve greater well-being and enjoy life.



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St. Paul, MN 55101
651-291-2848
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Brainerd Lakes Clinic
15860 Audubon Way
Baxter, MN 56401
218-824-5001
800-578-4266 (toll-free)

Burnsville Clinic
305 E. Nicollet Blvd.
Burnsville, MN 55337
952-223-3400
866-881-7386 (toll-free)

Duluth Clinic
Lakewalk Center
1420 London Rd.
Duluth, MN 55805
218-728-6160
800-903-7111 (toll-free)

Maple Grove Clinic
9550 Upland Ln. N.
Maple Grove, MN 55369
763-496-6000
888-218-0642 (toll-free)

Minnetonka Clinic
6060 Clearwater Dr.
Minnetonka, MN 55343
952-936-0977
800-277-1250 (toll-free)

Willmar Clinic
Lakeland Health Center
502 2nd St. S.W.
Willmar, MN 56201
651-634-1938
800-578-4266 (toll-free)

Mobile Outreach Clinic
For locations and schedules:
651-634-1938
800-578-4266 (toll-free)
www.gillettechildrens.org



St. Paul – Phalen Clinic
435 Phalen Blvd.
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