

Treatment Pathway: Medications

FACT: 70% of people with epilepsy can successfully manage their seizures with one appropriately chosen medication.

The best strategy for good seizure management is sticking with your prescribed medication and by taking the right amount of medication at the same times throughout the day.

Tips for Remembering Your Medication

- Take your medication as part of your daily routine – always at the same time, and in conjunction with other regular, daily activities. This will help you remember to take your medication, it will become an automatic part of your daily routine.
- Set an alarm to remind yourself to take your medication.
- Use a pill box with compartments for each day of the week so you can track if you've taken that day's dosage.
- There are also apps for mobile devices that will help you remember to take your medication

FACT: Medications are chosen depending upon where the seizures begin in the brain.

Side Effects

- Ask your doctor or pharmacist about potential side effects
- Some side effects that appear when taking a new medication will lessen or disappear over time.
- Find out which side effects you should be concerned about, and when you should call your doctor to alter your medication or dosage.

NEVER stop any anti-seizure medication without talking to your health care provider first. This can be very dangerous.

ALWAYS talk to your health care provider before changing your medication or dosage. This includes switching between name brand and generic drugs. Making changes to your medication routine without medical supervision can lead to unexpected seizures or side effects.

ALWAYS talk to your health care provider about the other medications, supplements and herbal remedies you are taking. These may alter the effectiveness of your anti-seizure medication.

TIP: Some medications need to be monitored with blood tests for your health and safety. Before starting a new anti-seizure medication, ask your health care provider if you need to get blood tests and if so, how often.



Questions for Your Health Care Provider:

- What side effects should I expect?
- Is there a risk of allergic reactions to the medication I am taking? If so, what are the signs of an allergic reaction and what should I do if they appear?
- How will this medication interact with other medications, herbal remedies, or supplements I'm taking?
- What do I do if I miss a dose?

Women and Anti-seizure Medications

Some anti-seizure medications can reduce the effectiveness of oral contraception (the birth control pill). If you are taking the birth control pill, discuss your medication options with your health care provider.

If you are considering getting pregnant, are pregnant, or interested in breast feeding, work with your health care provider to find an anti-seizure medication that is safe for you and your baby.

For more information about anti-seizure medications and women, please see our Women and Epilepsy resource sheet.

Drug Shortages

Over the last few years, there have been a series of drug shortages for anti-seizure drugs and other medications. Some people have tried to refill their prescription at their pharmacy only to find out that the medication is unavailable. Suddenly stopping or changing an anti-seizure medication can be dangerous. Here are some tips to help deal with drug shortages:

- Place your refill order at least several days, or even a couple of weeks, before you run out of medication. This will provide extra time to come up with a solution if your medication is in short supply.
- If your medication is unavailable, contact your health care provider immediately.
- Do not alter your dosage without medical supervision from your health care provider. Continue to take the same amount of medication at the same times.
- Work with your health care provider to find a solution or alternative.

This material is intended to provide basic information about epilepsy to the general public. It is not intended to, nor does it, constitute medical advice.

Adapted from "Anti-Epileptic Medications" (BC Epilepsy Society) and "Frequently Asked Questions About Drug Shortages" (Epilepsy Ontario).