

Taking care of your physical and mental wellness



Epilepsy is a common chronic health condition. In fact, 1 in 26 people will experience epilepsy at some point during their life. After migraine, stroke, and Alzheimer’s disease, epilepsy is the 4th most diagnosed neurological condition in the United States.¹

After a diagnosis of epilepsy, your doctor may prescribe medication to help control your seizures.² Self-care habits can also play an important role in your overall health and may help in seizure control.³

What is self-care?⁴

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, self-care is defined as “taking the time to do things that help you live well and improve both your physical health and mental health.”⁴ Read on to learn more about ways you can improve self-care to help you better manage your epilepsy.



Setting goals

Taking your medication as prescribed by your doctor is very important in managing a chronic condition like epilepsy. It is also beneficial to adopt health-minded behaviors that can have an impact on your epilepsy such as the ones listed below.



Treatment management, such as remembering to take your medicine, keeping appointments with your health care team, and communicating thoroughly with them.⁵



Seizure management, such as recognizing and avoiding seizure triggers and keeping track of when seizures happen, telling others what to do during a seizure, and learning what to do during recovery from a seizure.⁵



Lifestyle management, such as getting enough sleep, controlling stress levels, and making other healthy lifestyle adjustments and choices.⁵

Caring for your well-being while living with epilepsy

There are many actions you can take to help control your seizures. First, follow your treatment plan and if your doctor has prescribed medicines, be sure to take them exactly as directed. Here are some additional steps you can include into your daily routine to help your overall well-being.

Keep a seizure diary or journal

Your doctors and nurses can help you better understand your epilepsy and how to live with it, but they need your help to keep them informed. Keep track of things such as:

- How often you're having seizures
- How other people describe your seizures
- Any side effects you think might be caused by your medications
- Any triggers you believe may be affecting your seizures, such as too little sleep
- How you physically feel after having a seizure
- How you feel overall emotionally



You can use a notebook or digital journal to keep track of your seizures and medication schedule, identify triggers, reminders to take your medicine, and more. For example, check out **Nile**, a **digital seizure diary app**, recommended by the Epilepsy Foundation.



← Scan to see the Nile app

Certain lifestyle factors may trigger seizures. Some common triggers include missing medication doses, stress, not getting enough sleep, and drinking large amounts of alcohol.⁶

Get social

You may also find peer support to be useful in helping you gain additional self-management knowledge and skills. Below are some online groups you may be interested in learning about. Visit each to learn more.

patientslikeme.com

myepilepsyteam.com



Monitor your emotional health

Feeling down or depressed can affect anyone, but when you have epilepsy, you may experience a higher level of these emotions.⁷ The relationship between epilepsy and depression is complex and can be related to things such as seizure type, severity of epilepsy, hormone levels, and effect of seizure medications.⁷ How you're able to cope with these feelings may impact your overall health.



Ask yourself how often you've experienced any of these emotional or physical symptoms⁸ and share your findings with your doctor

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Having difficulty sleeping | <input type="radio"/> Feeling irritable |
| <input type="radio"/> Sleeping more than usual | <input type="radio"/> Feelings of guilt or worthlessness |
| <input type="radio"/> Feeling hopeless | <input type="radio"/> Having difficulty sitting still |
| <input type="radio"/> Feeling sad, upset, or "empty" | <input type="radio"/> Having digestive issues, or unusual aches or pains without a clear physical cause and/or that don't ease even with treatment |
| <input type="radio"/> Having difficulty concentrating | <input type="radio"/> Having trouble remembering things |
| <input type="radio"/> Feeling tired all the time | <input type="radio"/> Having suicidal thoughts |
| <input type="radio"/> Moving or talking slowly | <input type="radio"/> Losing interest in hobbies |
| <input type="radio"/> Losing appetite or eating too much | |

Having epilepsy doesn't mean you should expect to feel symptoms of depression. However, if you've been experiencing the types of symptoms listed above for **2 weeks or more**,⁷ it may be time to talk with your health care team.

If you have thoughts of suicide, call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** right away: **1-800-273-8255**. They are available anytime, day or night.



Scan to start a Lifeline Chat

Keep learning

There are many things you can do to take control of your overall health and well-being in managing epilepsy. Several informational programs are available online that you may find helpful. Visit each to learn more.⁵



PEARLS depression treatment program for adults with epilepsy
www.epilepsy.com/manage/managing-epilepsy-well-network/pearls

UPLIFT guides adults to better understand and cope with depression
www.epilepsy.com/manage/managing-epilepsy-well-network/uplift

HOBSCOTCH helps patients with epilepsy-related memory problems
www.hobscotch.org/

TIME program for adults with epilepsy and any serious mental illness
www.managingepilepsywell.org/time

PACES self-management program tailored toward stress, mood, memory concerns
www.managingepilepsywell.org/paces

WEBEASE web-based self-management skills program for adults with epilepsy
www.cdc.gov/prc/resources/tools/webease.html

Doing your part to manage epilepsy may give you a better sense of control of your life. Speak with your health care team about lifestyle changes you can make. They will likely have specific recommendations for you based on their experience and expertise in treating epilepsy.

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