

## Epilepsy and Young Women

**The nurse who helps me with my epilepsy told me I was "going into puberty" and might "outgrow my medicine dose." What does that mean?**

Puberty is the time when your body changes and you grow from a child into an adult. You get taller and weigh more, and you start to grow breasts and body hair. Some of these physical changes happen quickly and the dose of seizure medicine that worked before is not enough for your new body size. Your doctor may order more frequent lab tests to check the level of medication in your blood, to be sure that you are taking enough medicine to keep your seizures controlled.

**I've had "petit mal" seizures since I was in first grade. My doctor said I would probably outgrow them as a teenager. Is that true?**

There are certain kinds of seizures that are almost always outgrown in teenage years. Petit mal seizures (also known as "childhood absence") are an example. You and your doctor will decide with your parents when it is safe to stop your medication. This doesn't always work and you may still have seizures. Then you need to keep taking your medicine.

**My friend takes a different medication for her seizures. Which is the best one?**

There are many good medications for seizures, and some work for one type of seizure better than they do for other types of seizures. You and your doctor choose your medication by the pattern of your EEG and how the medicine affects you. You need to let him or her know if you are still having seizures or if you feel bad or funny when you take your medicine.

**I've started to have monthly periods and I've heard this will make my seizures worse. Is that true?**

There's no way to tell if your seizures will change when you start your period. Usually, there is no change in seizure pattern. However, some girls and women have more seizures just before or at the beginning of their periods. Although we don't completely understand the cause, it seems to be related to hormonal changes. If you notice that your seizures seem worse around the time of your periods or when you ovulate, talk to your doctor. It is a good idea to keep a calendar and mark in it when you get your period and when you have your seizures. You should bring this with you when you go to your doctor's visit and show it to the doctor or nurse.

For more information on seizures related to periods, refer to the [information on Hormones and Epilepsy](#).

**I'm scared my friends will find out about my seizures, and will make fun of me. What should I do?**

It's up to you who you tell about your epilepsy, but it is sometimes hard to keep secrets from your best friends or people you spend a lot of time with. Most of your friends will be all right with it. It may help to talk this over with your parents or another adult you trust and get their help in making the decision.

## ***Epilepsy and Young Women (continued)***

### **I have a boyfriend. What if I have a seizure when we are together?**

It's normal for you to worry about this. He may be one of the people you tell about your seizure disorder, so there won't be any unexpected surprises. If your boyfriend knows what to expect, he will be able to help and support you if a seizure does occur. Perhaps one of your parents, or a nurse or a doctor can help you explain the facts about seizures to your friends.

### **My parents worry about me and won't let me do stuff with my friends. How can I be more independent?**

Your parents love you and just want to keep you from getting hurt. Unfortunately, sometimes it feels like they treat you like a child. It may be helpful to have your nurse or doctor talk to them about letting you do things. You might have to take some extra precautions. Think through the activities you want to do, and be sure you would not be badly hurt if you had a seizure. For example, if you go swimming or diving, you'll want to make sure that someone is with you who knows what to do if you have a seizure. If you are going skiing, ride the chair lift with someone who knows what to do. Practice your negotiating skills to find a plan that is comfortable for both you and your parents.

### **My parents are always lecturing me about not drinking or doing drugs. It seems like everybody else does it. Why can't I?**

Drinking alcohol when you are underage, or using illegal drugs at any age, is not good for anyone. If you have epilepsy, these alcohol and drugs may increase the risk of your having seizures. Or they may cause you to have bad effects from your medication. It's your decision to make, but weigh the risks against doing these things just because everyone else does.

### **Can I get a driver's license if I have seizures?**

That depends on several things. The laws are different from state to state, but in most places if your seizures are well controlled and you are dependable about taking your medication, you can drive a car. Some states make you wait six months to a year after having a seizure before you can drive. Driving is a serious privilege, involving your safety and that of other people. If seizures keep you from getting a driver's license, be creative about finding other ways of getting around, like public transportation or sharing rides with friends. For more information on laws in your state, please refer to our [state-by-state guide to driving laws](#).

### **My boyfriend and I are really in love. Can we get married if I have epilepsy?**

Yes. Most people with seizures fall in love and marry just like anyone else. If you are serious about your relationship there are important issues for all young couples to consider. You need to understand the facts about your bodies and your sexuality. Get information about sexually transmitted diseases, and if you are sexually active make sure you understand birth control options and safe sex.

## *Epilepsy and Young Women (continued)*

### **Will I be able to have children?**

Yes. Women with epilepsy get pregnant and most of them have normal, healthy babies. There are concerns related to seizures, certain medications and a specific vitamin supplement called folic acid that are important to discuss with your doctor before you become pregnant. (If you are not taking folic acid, you should ask your doctor or nurse about it.) Having children is an important decision for any couple, and it requires planning and commitment. There may be some special adjustments if you have epilepsy, but there is no reason you can't be a successful parent.

### **I hate my seizures and having to take medication. Sometimes, I go to my room and just explode.**

Everyone with epilepsy feels angry and sad at times. Those feelings are normal. If you start to feel hopeless or overwhelmed, talk to your parents or some adult you trust, and get some help. Some people may need counseling to talk about their feelings, and learn ways to deal with stress. Don't ever be ashamed to ask for help. You're worth it. You can also talk to others who deal with some of the same things you do if you log onto our Community Forums.

**Credit to: Epilepsy Foundation, [www.epilepsy.com](http://www.epilepsy.com)**