

When you head to college with
partial-onset seizures

PREPARATION IS KEY



Epilepsy & college



The summer is coming to an end and you're excited about attending college. Whether it's your first year at college or another year back at school, now is a good time to prepare.

You may have a lot of questions about how seizures may affect your college life. Think about how best to take care of yourself at school and what you can do to manage stress. If you do, your college years will be a healthy, productive, and enjoyable time!



“It is only natural for any new college student to get swept up in the excitement of newly found independence, but it is vital for young adults with epilepsy embarking on their journey into higher education to know how to manage their epilepsy and to take ownership of their disorder.”

– Dr. Janice Buelow,
Assistant Professor of Nursing
at Indiana University

Adapting to a new lifestyle



Going to college is certainly a major life transition. It can be a great time for learning, meeting new friends, and socializing. For those living with partial-onset seizures, going to college can also present new challenges as the change in lifestyle can affect your seizure control.

- Try to **get enough sleep** as lack of sleep can be a seizure trigger¹
- **Limit alcohol intake**, as alcohol changes the blood levels of seizure medicines and can cause seizures²
- Learn how to **better handle peer pressure** to avoid having alcohol- and/or drug-induced seizures³
- **Become familiar with the college's health services**⁴
 - If living on campus, make an appointment at the health center to let them know about your epilepsy, and share with them your **Seizure Action Plan**
- **Take medication consistently** each day as prescribed³
- **Arrange to change pharmacies** to the new location to ensure no doses are missed⁴
- **Develop a support network**¹
 - Look for a support group through your local epilepsy center or patient advocacy groups such as the Epilepsy Foundation (epilepsy.com/connect/local)

Remember...



You are not alone. There are others living with epilepsy-related issues as well. If there are no Epilepsy Foundation support groups, why not **start a group on campus?** Or maybe an **online forum or chat?**

Living away from home



When away at school, roommates and close friends are like extensions of family members. It's important that you feel comfortable talking about your seizures and taking your medicine around them. Sharing this information may feel good and provide added support. This will help prepare them for what might happen if you have a seizure and help them know what to do to.

- **Inform roommates and other friends about your epilepsy** and your need for daily medicine⁴
- Encourage them to become **Seizure First Aid certified** to help if you have a seizure in your room⁴
- **Inform the Resident Assistant (RA)** in case of an emergency⁴
- **Post first aid information** on your room fridge or in a central location⁵
 - List contact numbers for your doctor and parents with specific instructions
- **Let people know when to call 911**, your doctor, or your parents. Tell them to call 911 if⁵:
 - Your seizure lasts more than 5 minutes
 - You have an injury
 - You are having trouble breathing or waking after the seizure



The Epilepsy Foundation offers free **virtual Seizure First Aid training** that may be helpful to friends and support staff

Stress reduction tips



There are common stressors that all college students face. The key is to find ways to reduce the intensity of these stressors.

Plan ahead

- **Do a walk through** a few days prior to the first day³
- **Set a workable schedule** that includes taking medication, eating, studying, sleeping, and socializing³
- **When refilling your prescriptions**, call a week or more in advance or consider using a mail-order pharmacy⁵
- **Identify nearby hospitals** in case your school's health center is closed during an emergency situation⁵

Pace yourself

- **Take the minimum course load** at first³
- **If you need to work, limit it to no more than 15 hours per week** until you are more familiar with the demands of college³



Stay connected to friends and family; studies have shown that having friends can lead to better health outcomes¹

BE PREPARED

When you head to college with partial-onset seizures



- Try to get enough sleep¹
 - Limit alcohol intake²
 - Share your Seizure Action Plan with your college's health services⁴
 - Take medication each day as prescribed³
 - Arrange to change pharmacies⁴
-
- Inform roommates, the Resident Assistant (RA), and close friends about your epilepsy⁴
 - Develop a support network¹
 - **Plan ahead** and **pace yourself** to help reduce stress³

References:

1. Epilepsy Foundation Wellness Institute. Wellness and epilepsy. 2019. <http://www.epilepsy.com>. Accessed June 18, 2024. 2. Epilepsy Foundation. College years and epilepsy. <https://www.epilepsy.com/stories/college-years-and-epilepsy>. Accessed June 25, 2024. 3. Epilepsy Foundation. Pursuing a higher education poses unique challenges for those with epilepsy. <https://www.epilepsy.com/stories/pursuing-higher-education-poses-unique-challenges-those-epilepsy>. Accessed June 25, 2024. 4. Epilepsy Foundation. Preparing for back to school success. <https://www.epilepsy.com/stories/preparing-back-to-school-success>. Accessed June 18, 2024. 5. Epilepsy Foundation. Attending college. <https://www.epilepsy.com/parents-and-caregivers/work-college/attending-college>. Accessed June 25, 2024.