

EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

Epilepsy, especially when seizures are well-controlled, has little or no impact on school performance for many students. However, seizures and the underlying cause of seizures can result in problems with learning, memory, attention, and other skills needed to succeed in school.



Most people with epilepsy are able to work and be productive in many fields. Sometimes seizures can interfere with a person's ability to work. Having frequent or even occasional seizures may make it hard to find or keep a job, but it's not impossible.

EDUCATION

- ▶ About 1 in 2 students with epilepsy have some form of learning difficulties and may need extra help.
- ▶ Learning problems may be hard to detect.
- ▶ Students may have difficulties with language, memory, attention, and problem solving.
- ▶ Some seizure medicines may cause side effects that affect learning and memory.
- ▶ Some types of epilepsy may have medical or neurological problems that can affect learning and school performance.



The impact of seizures on learning may depend on many factors such as:

- ▶ The age seizures start
- ▶ Cause of seizures
- ▶ Age when treatment begins
- ▶ How often seizures occur
- ▶ Where seizures arise in the brain
- ▶ How well a student responds to treatment

Identifying learning problems early is key to getting the right help and maximizing a student's learning.

EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

Is help available for students with epilepsy?

Everyone has the right to a free public education in the United States. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act outlines that all people, including those with disabilities, have a right to participate in programs and activities that receive federal funding from the US Department of Education. This civil rights law ensures that students with epilepsy cannot be discriminated against in public school settings.

- ▶ All students with seizures who may be having learning problems are eligible for an assessment of their learning and educational needs.
- ▶ Some students with epilepsy may need individualized support in a school environment, such as an individualized education plan (IEP) or 504 plan.
- ▶ Telling the school about a student's epilepsy is the first step to getting the help they need. Talk with your epilepsy doctor about school and how you or your child are doing.
- ▶ Neuropsychology testing may be recommended to assess the student's strengths and difficulties.



How will having epilepsy affect my child in school activities?

School activities are a way for kids to develop social skills and try new things. It's important to assess each child's needs, restrictions, and safety concerns for school activities. Make sure that all school personnel are taught seizure first aid and that people in charge are aware of any IEP, 504 plan, or seizure response plan. For safety tips to prevent injury, visit epilepsy.com/safety.

How can I advocate for my child in school?

Know the school policy: The school is required to provide for student needs so they can have a positive school experience.

- ▶ Staff members should know how to help students with epilepsy.
- ▶ Risks of school activities inside and outside of the normal school day (holiday activities, field trips, etc.) should be assessed and planned for.

Have an IEP or 504 plan: Inform the school about the student's epilepsy. The school must make sure that needs are met and staff are trained to give support.

- ▶ An IEP defines the support the student needs, when they need it, and who is responsible for making sure these needs are met.
- ▶ A 504 plan includes accommodations that a student may need but does not include specialized educational needs. Accommodations may include extra time to take tests or complete homework, a quiet area to recover, tutoring, or modified class times.

EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

- ▶ Not all people with epilepsy will need an IEP or 504 plan. Talk to the student's guidance counselor, teacher, and school nurse about their needs.

Develop a Seizure Response Plan:

Creating a seizure action plan is important for every student with epilepsy (bit.ly/seizureresponse). It should be clear, yet concise, and include information about the student's typical seizures, medicines, when additional help is needed, first aid steps, and if rescue therapies may be needed.

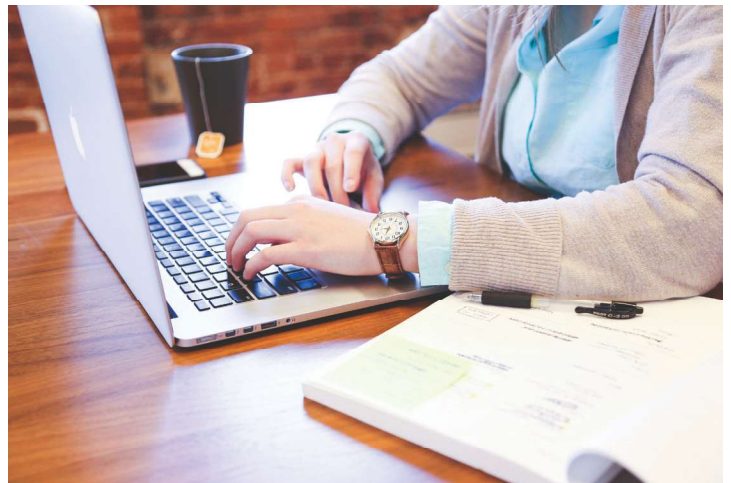
- ▶ Work with the school nurse and your epilepsy health care team to develop the seizure response plan.
- ▶ Seizure response plans should be included in IEPs and 504 plans too.



EMPLOYMENT

Living with some forms of epilepsy can create challenges that affect the ability to work.

- ▶ **Safety**—seizures with falls or high risk of injury may be unsafe in certain work environments
- ▶ **Ability to drive**—not being able to drive due to uncontrolled seizures may make it hard to get to work or perform jobs that require driving
- ▶ **Developmental disabilities**—some forms of epilepsy are associated with developmental problems that may prevent people from being gainfully employed
- ▶ **Mild to moderate cognitive problems**—problems with memory, thinking, or attention may make certain types of work difficult
- ▶ **Side effects**—sleepiness, memory problems, or lack of coordination/balance may interfere with some types of work
- ▶ **Healthcare visits**—frequent visits, tests, hospitalizations, or the time needed for recovery after seizures may affect work schedules
- ▶ **Other neurological or medical problems** may affect the ability to work



What type of work can I do?

Just like anyone else, the better qualified you are for a position, the better your chances of success. If your seizures are under control, almost all jobs should be open to you. Some jobs (such as police, firemen, military, or airline pilots) have special regulations that may exclude people with epilepsy who are still having seizures or taking seizure medications.

EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT

If you don't yet have full control of your seizures, consider jobs that:

- ▶ Don't require driving
- ▶ Don't have dangerous work environments
- ▶ Allow work from home
- ▶ Allow flexible hours

Is epilepsy covered by the ADA?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination in the workplace on the basis of a person's disability. The ADA grants all individuals with disabilities uniform protections regardless of which state they live in. The 2008 Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA) makes it clear that people with conditions such as epilepsy are covered by the ADA and protected from discrimination on the basis of their epilepsy.

Should I disclose my epilepsy to my employer and co-workers?

You do not need to tell an employer about your epilepsy or other disability unless you want to or if you may need accommodations to do your job. Examples of reasonable accommodations for a person with epilepsy may include:

- ▶ Changes in the workspace to prevent injury if a seizure should occur
- ▶ Training workers on seizure first aid
- ▶ Change in work hours to allow for reasonable breaks or to minimize seizure triggers
- ▶ Use of written or technology aides to help with memory or learning problems
- ▶ Time off or flexible work hours for tests, hospitalizations, or medical visits



Some people tell employers and coworkers about their seizures so those around them know what to do if they have a seizure.

What type of help is available for work-related problems?

Anyone with epilepsy who is having trouble at work or difficulty finding or keeping a job should ask to see a vocational rehabilitation specialist. Vocational counselors can help assess a person's job readiness and skills, teach new job skills, help find a job, or provide coaching to help workers succeed in their job. Your local Epilepsy Foundation office may offer job help too.

How can I learn more about my rights in the workplace?

The Epilepsy Foundation can help you learn about your rights and responsibilities, as well as how to ask for reasonable accommodations. If you are concerned about discrimination at work or have other legal concerns, please contact the Epilepsy Foundation's Jeanne A. Carpenter Legal Defense Fund (epilepsylegal.org).

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- ▶ Employment and Epilepsy: epilepsy.com/employment-and-epilepsy
- ▶ Seizure Response Plan: epilepsy.com/responseplans
- ▶ Advocating for Your Rights: advocacy.epilepsy.com
- ▶ U.S. Department of Labor CareerOneStop: careeronestop.org
- ▶ Job Accommodation Network: askjan.org
- ▶ Legal Rights for People with Epilepsy: epilepsylegal.org