Staying active and epilepsy

Being active and mentally alert can help with the management of epilepsy. This is especially important for older people who may start to lose confidence or interest in activities they once enjoyed. As a carer, you can support an older person with epilepsy by helping them to find activities that they enjoy.

An active lifestyle helps to manage epilepsy

Older people with epilepsy should be encouraged to participate in leisure and sporting activities so long as their seizure risk is carefully managed. An active lifestyle that exercises the mind and the body helps with the medical management of epilepsy. Activities such as walking, stretching, yoga, Tai Chi, bowls, swimming, and dance can help an older person maintain a good fitness level.

A 20–30 minute walk every day is an ideal exercise for maintaining a good quality fitness level. If this is too much, it can be broken up into two or three 10–minute walks to begin with. In an aged care setting, this could be a walk around the garden or participation in lifestyle and leisure activities. A good level of fitness improves the chance of maintaining independence, managing health issues and recovery from illness, as well as reducing risks related to epilepsy.
A healthy diet

Making sure that an older person has a healthy diet is also important. A diet that includes plenty of fruits and vegetables and good quality fats such as avocado and olive oil is a great place to start. Discouraging high sugar foods and limiting alcohol intake is also helpful. Making sure that they are well hydrated with plenty of water is also essential.

Sleep

A lack of good quality sleep can trigger seizures in many people with epilepsy. Older people living with epilepsy often report poor sleeping patterns. Generally, people who exercise regularly and stay active will experience better sleep. Many strategies can be used to improve sleep, including making sure that the temperature, light and noise levels of the bedroom encourage sleep and suggesting gentle meditation or relaxation activities before bed.

What can you do to help?

As an aged care worker or carer you can support an older person with epilepsy to:

- understand their seizure and injury risks
- complete a pre-exercise screening test
- find suitable activities to maintain an active lifestyle
- discuss any concerns they may have about engaging in certain activities
- maintain a healthy diet and weight
- support them to quit smoking.

Epilepsy support

The National Epilepsy Support Service (NESS) is available Mon – Sat, 9:00am – 7:00pm (AEST) to provide support and information across Australia. Phone: 1300 761 487. Email: support@epilepsysmart.org.au

Lived experience

We recognise all people living with epilepsy and the impact it has on their lives. We take a moment to acknowledge the lived experience they have shared with us. In sharing their stories, we acknowledge the strength and resilience people living with epilepsy have shown in the face of not getting a fair go.

A medical note

The information contained in this publication provides general information about epilepsy. It does not provide specific advice. Specific health and medical advice should always be obtained from a qualified health professional.