



Epilepsy is  
more than just  
seizures

# A practical guide for schools in Australia

Epilepsy Smart Schools





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### Epilepsy awareness in schools

All schools have a duty of care to provide a safe learning environment and accommodate the needs of their students. Epilepsy is more than just seizures; simply having staff trained in seizure first aid is not enough. All individuals who have a duty of care within a school need to understand the impact that epilepsy can have on student learning, self-esteem and socialisation. They should also undertake epilepsy-specific training in how to understand and manage epilepsy.

### What is an Epilepsy Smart School?

An Epilepsy Smart School is a school that embeds inclusive, safe and educationally sound practices for students living with epilepsy. Every person with epilepsy has different needs and requires a different supportive approach.

### About this resource


This document outlines the written resources available to you and your school or Early Learning Centre as you work towards becoming 'epilepsy smart'. It also outlines the best-practice steps that schools must take when working with children with epilepsy and their caregivers. If you cannot find the information you need, visit

[www.epilepsysmartschools.org.au](http://www.epilepsysmartschools.org.au)

### School transitions

When a student is transitioning into a new school, parents/guardians and teachers should take the following steps.

- Parents/guardians fill out the **school transition checklist**. This practical resource helps parents and guardians establish clear communication with the school. It also helps parents/guardians to check important information around staff training and epilepsy disclosure protocols. **1**
- The school cooperates with the student's parents/guardians to create a **support strategy for the student**. This should involve a consideration of the student's individual health and learning needs as well as their social and mental health requirements.
- A **clear communication pathway** must be established and documented between home and school. This pathway will be used to report issues such as seizure frequency and any learning, health, or social concerns.
- **School staff with a duty of care complete epilepsy training**. The training must consider common co-existing issues related to learning, behaviour, safety, mental health awareness, and social implications. **4, 5**
- School staff must have **current seizure first aid and CPR training**. **8**
- The school must ensure that a dedicated school staff member will always keep the student with epilepsy under **visual observation during water activities**. **9**
- Teachers are encouraged to raise awareness within the school setting about epilepsy using in-class **learning resources including activity sheets and lesson plans**. **10**



## Take care to balance risk and inclusion and consider what's important to and for the student

### Inclusion and risk

Risk exposure is part of life and all students, not just those with epilepsy, face risks in the classroom, schoolyard and on camps/excursions. For students with epilepsy, the balance between inclusion and risk needs to be considered. An Epilepsy Smart School will:

- Take care to balance risk and inclusion and consider what's important to and for the student.
- Ensure it has an Epilepsy Management Plan (EMP) and, if required, an Emergency Medication Management Plan (EMMP) on hand. Plans are developed by the parent/guardian, and may be done in conjunction with, for example, the school's nurse, a disability support worker, or allied health professional, and must be signed by the child's treating doctor.
- Ensure that the appropriate school staff have access to the EMP and EMMP.
- Consult with parents/guardians and, where appropriate, the student on risk management issues for day-to-day activities, excursions, and camps.\*
- Ensure that all risk assessments are based on the student's unique circumstances.\*
- Make all reasonable adjustments to enable the student with epilepsy to attend activities. Schools owe a duty of care to all students with epilepsy when attending excursions, camps and other school activities.\*
- Not require parents/guardians to attend school to administer medication or provide medical or in-class/excursion support.
- Ensure that parents/guardians understand their rights concerning inclusive schools. **2**
- Ensure that students with epilepsy involved in work placements are supported to understand the implications of disclosure. **7**



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### Learning environment

Many students with epilepsy need additional learning support, especially around memory, attention, thinking skills, and behaviour. This support should be customised to suit the individual needs of the student. **5**

Schools and teachers should ensure that the school learning environment is safe and accommodating to the needs of students with epilepsy. This may include:

- Providing special consideration during exams and tests, such as allowing additional reading time or additional breaks.\*
- Providing social support for students who find social interactions challenging.\*
- Consulting parents/guardians if learning or social issues arise.
- Ensuring all parties understand that both parents/guardians and school staff may initiate conversations about a student's learning. **6**
- Initiating Individual Learning Plans when needed and ensuring that parents/guardians feel welcome to engage in these meetings. **5**

### Epilepsy Management Plan

The Epilepsy Management Plan (EMP) documents the student's seizure description and what to do in the event of a seizure, the impact of seizures on the student and the post-seizure support required. The EMP also identifies whether emergency medication has been prescribed and when to call 000.

Parents/guardians of a student with epilepsy will work with their child's doctor to create the EMP, often in conjunction with a school nurse, a disability support worker or other allied health professional.

- The **plan** should be current and updated annually, having been endorsed by the student's doctor
- All relevant school **staff must have ready access to the student's EMP.**

The Epilepsy Management Plan (EMP) template is used. **3**

### Emergency Medication Management Plan

Some students with epilepsy need to take emergency medication to stop a seizure or a cluster of seizures (multiple seizures within a short time). The school must ensure that an Emergency Medication Management Plan (EMMP) is followed and that relevant school staff can access this information.

- Schools and parents/guardians should ensure that the Emergency Medication Management Plan (EMMP) (Midazolam or Clonazepam) template is used. **3**
- Parents/guardians must ensure the EMMP is completed and endorsed by the doctor prescribing the medication and updated annually or as required if medication type and/or dosage change.
- The school must ensure that the EMMP is attached to the EMP and is readily available to all trained staff.
- Only staff who have received appropriate student-specific training in accordance with the EMMP can administer the emergency medication.
- The administration of emergency medication should always be done in conjunction with any other instructions in the student's EMMP, such as when to seek additional medical assistance.

*\* Inclusive school parameters are set out in the Disability Standards for Education, which the Australian Government developed under the Disability Discrimination Act – Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Cth), formulated under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth). s. 31(1).*



## Additional resources

The following resources can be accessed via [www.epilepsysmartschools.org.au](http://www.epilepsysmartschools.org.au)

### Family resources

#### 1 Transition checklist

A practical resource that provides a checklist for parents/guardians to complete before their child moves into school.

#### 2 Inclusive schools: your rights and responsibilities

A parent/guardian resource that provides guidance on common inclusion questions with accompanying practical strategies and approaches to managing risk.

#### 3 Epilepsy Management Plan (EMP) and Emergency Medication Management Plan (EMMP)

Electronic templates are available online to help identify the person's seizure type/s, support needs and emergency procedures.

### School resources

#### 4 Children with epilepsy: a teacher's resource

A summary document to support teachers in the classroom.

#### 5 Individual Learning Plan (ILP) template and accompanying fact sheets

An electronic ILP with a sample plan and fact sheets on self-esteem, auditory processing, behaviours, numeracy, visual processing, and memory.

### Family/school resources

#### 6 Learning conversations about epilepsy: a parent and teacher's resource

A practical resource that assists parents/guardians and staff to better understand the learning implications for a student with epilepsy.

### Student resources

#### 7 Disclosing your epilepsy

A practical resource for students with epilepsy who are about to embark on a work placement. This document considers the implications of disclosing epilepsy to employers and other staff.

#### 8 First aid

Seizure first aid guide including when to call 000 for an Ambulance.

#### 9 Swimming with epilepsy

A resource containing advice and tips about swimming with safety and mitigating risk.

#### 10 Learning resources

Postcards, activity sheets, and lesson plans.



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### Glossary

#### Emergency medication

Medication prescribed as an emergency response for the control of prolonged or cluster seizures.

#### Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a medical condition that affects the brain and causes seizures. It is diagnosed by a medical specialist after a person experiences at least two unprovoked seizures. Epilepsy is marked by sudden episodes of sensory disturbance, loss of consciousness, or convulsions, associated with abnormal electrical activity in the brain.

#### Individual Learning Plan

A document developed by a school to address the student's specific educational needs. The plan is based on an assessment of a student's learning and social needs and sets out how the school will support the identified goals. Parents/guardians should be consulted in the development of these plans.

#### Midazolam

A medication often used for emergency management of seizures as it can stop seizures quickly. Not all people with epilepsy require emergency medication. It is usually administered buccally (inside the cheek) or intranasally.

#### Student support strategy

A cooperative partnership between parents/guardians, school representatives and professionals that is developed to support a student with additional learning needs.

### Other resources

To find out more about Epilepsy Smart Schools and how you can access education and training for educators in your state or territory, contact the **National Epilepsy Support Service** on 1300 761 487.

This fact sheet is part of a suite of resources targeted to both parents and teachers to assist students with epilepsy in school settings.

The *Epilepsy Smart Schools – A Practical Guide* and supporting resources provide information on how a school can embed inclusive, safe and educationally sound practices for students with epilepsy and, in so doing, become 'epilepsy smart'. The guide and supporting resources can be accessed via [www.epilepsysmartschools.org.au](http://www.epilepsysmartschools.org.au)

### Epilepsy support

The National Epilepsy Support Service is available Monday – Saturday, 9.00am – 7.00pm (AEST) to provide support and information across Australia. Phone: 1300 761 487  
Email: [support@epilepsysmart.org.au](mailto: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.**

**Epilepsy Smart Australia Program** **National Epilepsy Support Service** 1300 761 487 **Website** [epilepsysmart.org.au](http://epilepsysmart.org.au)



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The Epilepsy Smart Australia Program received funding from the Australian Government.

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