



Factsheet: Making the most of your anti-epileptic drugs

Starting on anti-epileptic drugs

When you start taking anti-epileptic drugs (AEDs) you will slowly build up the dose. This gives your body time to get used to it. It also makes side effects less likely.

It can take your body a while to get used to new AEDs. Some people experience more side effects during the first couple of months after starting a new AED. These usually settle down once your body gets used to the medication. You could speak to your doctor or Epilepsy Specialist Nurse (ESN) if you are experiencing side effects.

Taking anti-epileptic drugs

It is important to take your medication exactly as prescribed. Not taking your AEDs regularly is the most common cause of seizures for those on medication.

Your body breaks down medication like it breaks down food. To keep the level of drug high enough to control your seizures, you have to take your medication every day at around the same time. If you miss a tablet or take it much later than your normal time, the level of drug in your system is lowered. This means you can be more likely to have a seizure. Your seizure control may also be affected if you accidentally take your tablets twice, or take your doses too close together. You may also be more likely to experience side effects.

Do not stop or reduce your medication suddenly as you will be more likely to have a seizure. Always talk this over with your doctor or epilepsy specialist nurse first.

Your doctor or epilepsy specialist nurse will have discussed with you what to do if you miss a tablet. If you have missed a dose or have accidentally overdosed on your medication, contact your Epilepsy Specialist Nurse, GP or **NHS 24** on **08454 24 24 24**.

We can tell you more about pill reminders and alarms. These can help you to remember to take your medication on time. For more information on this speak

to one of our Contact Officers on 0808 800 2200 or email enquiries@epilepsyscotland.org.uk

Brand or generic anti-epileptic drugs?

The SIGN (Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network) guidelines recommend getting the same make or brand of AED all the time:

‘Formulations of AED’s are not interchangeable and generic substitution should not be employed.’ (SIGN 70, Section 3.2, page 9)

There may be small differences in how AEDs are made, and this may change the way they control seizures. Most people will be fine but in some cases a switch between branded and generic versions could trigger a seizure or cause side effects.

Make sure your GP always writes the same AED name on your prescription. Your pharmacist will have to give you exactly what is prescribed and cannot change your medication to a different make or brand. If the packaging of your AEDs looks different, ask your GP or pharmacist to check that it is exactly the same medicine as usual.

Up to 70% of people with epilepsy find that their seizures are controlled with medication. Our treatment guide looks at other treatment options in more depth.

For more help and information

Call our helpline 0808 800 2200, text 07786 209 501

Or email us at enquiries@epilepsyscotland.org.uk