

(7) Parents: Explaining epilepsy to your child

How you tackle this depends very much on the age of your child. It is important that your child understands the condition. An older child may initially refuse to talk about epilepsy, however, most children will cope better once they understand what is going on. Be as open and upfront as you can but do not overwhelm your child with too many facts.

If you have other children, they too will need to be told.

A child will very easily pick up on their parent's stress and anxieties. Staying positive around your child will help them to adjust much more quickly.

Your child's epilepsy specialist nurse will also be able to help your child understand epilepsy. In fact, an older child may prefer to speak to a nurse rather than a parent.

Using storybooks to explain epilepsy

Storybooks can be an effective way of starting a conversation about epilepsy, especially with a younger child. We have compiled below just a short (but not inclusive) selection of publications for children and young adults that may be helpful in explaining epilepsy in an age appropriate way.

'Farah and Ted visit the hospital' is a story about a young girl going through the process of diagnosis at hospital. This is one of our storybooks and is aimed at children of pre-school / early primary school age. Please contact our helpline on 0808 800 2200 for a free copy.

'Brian learns about epilepsy' is a story about a small boy who finds out his mum has epilepsy. Our storybook can help explain epilepsy to a child of pre-school / early

primary school age, where a parent, sibling or friend has epilepsy. Phone our helpline 0808 800 2200 for a free copy.

‘Happiness Heroes’ is one of our storybooks, dealing with the difficult subject of bullying using epilepsy as an example. It is aimed at children at primary 5 / 6. Contact our helpline 0808 800 2200 for a free copy.

‘So, what is epilepsy ...’ is for children of primary school age, written by the Children’s Epilepsy Service, Swansea NHS Trust. It is no longer available in print but we can email you an electronic copy on request.

‘Guide to getting on with life’ is our guide for teenagers, aged 13-19, who have epilepsy, addressing issues such as medication, alcohol, sex and social life. We can send out a free copy on request.

‘That’s what friends are for’ is a storybook aimed at young children aged 5-8 years, written by Epilepsy Action. It tells the story of a young boy who is coming to terms with being diagnosed with epilepsy and looks at how the different reactions of his friends and family affect him. We have limited free copies of this publication to give away, if you want a copy, please phone our helpline on 0808 800 2200.

Epilepsy Scotland youth service

We currently run two youth groups, one in Glasgow and one in Edinburgh for children and young people aged 11 to 19. These groups provide an opportunity to share their experiences, ask questions and have fun. Our experienced youth development workers can help and support a young person coming to terms with their epilepsy diagnosis. For more information about our youth service, please contact 0808 800 2200.