

EPILEPSY DURHAM REGION

matters



Making the Most of Your Doctor Visit

The goal of epilepsy treatment is to attain the best seizure control with minimal undesired side effects. As a team you and your doctor should work to achieve this goal. Your self-knowledge and the physician's medical experience and expertise are key elements in optimal treatment plans.

How Can I Prepare For My Visit?

Inform Yourself

Taking time to learn about epilepsy and your seizure type will help you to make the most of your doctor's appointment. You will be able to ask well-considered questions specific to your needs. Many information sources are available: Epilepsy Durham Region has a small library, with books, videos, pamphlets and articles related to epilepsy. We can send information to you or refer you to other useful sources. The clinic administrator at your doctor's office may be able to provide you with information resources and many hospitals have patient resource libraries. There are some excellent sources of information on the web. These two links are a great place to start:

www.epilepsyfoundation.org

www.epilepsy.com

Keep Track Of Your Seizures

A journal of your seizures can be an excellent tool in treatment. Record your seizure activity (what time they occur and how long they last) and any disruptions in your medication routine (if you missed a dose, drank alcohol, etc). Make notes of any stimuli or circumstances that seem to accompany seizure activity (stress, fatigue, flashing lights, etc). Excellent online tracking solution www.seizuretracker.com

Ask family members and friends for their observations of your movements before, during and after you have a seizure. Observers will often notice seizure events that you are not aware of. This information can reveal your true seizure type and enable your doctor to choose the best treatment. It may be helpful if you bring a videotape of one of your seizures to your doctor.

List Your Medications and Supplements

Be sure to tell your doctor of any other health concerns. List any prescribed medications, medicine allergies, supplements and alternative treatments that you are taking. Include the name of the medication and the dosage. Also a list of any previously used anti-seizure medications and some information of why it was changed. This information can help your doctor to optimize your treatment protocol.

Prioritize Your Concerns

Unfortunately, many doctors have a very busy schedule and might not be able to answer all your questions. Before going to your appointment, list several questions and prioritize them. This will help you optimize your time with your doctor. Make your questions open-ended and specific to you. If you think you might be anxious at your appointment, bring someone along for support. They can help you ask questions and help you to remember the doctor's responses. Below are some questions you may want to ask. Chose questions relevant for you and your situation.

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What Do You Know About Your Epilepsy?

What type of seizures do I have?

What is the cause of my seizures?

What are the different treatments?

Is it safe for me to drive? If not, when will it be safe to start driving again?

What other activities should I be cautious about?

Is it safe for me to drink alcohol?

What should I tell my friends, co-workers, and family members about this condition?

Questions About Medications

Seizures are commonly and often effectively treated with anti-epileptic medicines. These medicines sometimes cause undesirable side effects in some people. Most of the time, the effects are mild and short lasting. Many side effects will disappear as your body becomes used to the medicine. Discuss persistent side effects with your doctor. Adjusting your dosage may treat these side effects.

- Am I likely to have more seizures in the future without medication or other treatment?
- Do the risks of taking seizure medicines outweigh the benefits for me?
- What are some common side effects from my seizure medicines?
- Can seizure medicines cause allergic reactions?
- What side effects call for immediate consultation with a doctor?
- What happens when the dosage is too high or too low?
- Do seizure medicines impair mental processes?
- Should I be taking any additional vitamins or supplements?

Put Your Best Foot Forward

Doctors, like anyone, like to be treated with respect and in a friendly manner. A friendly greeting and genuine gratitude can go a long way in developing a good working relationship with your doctor.

Medical visits often involve spending time in the waiting room. This can be frustrating for many people. Be prepared for a wait – bring something to keep yourself busy. Remaining patient will help you to stay focused and make the most of your visit. The process of finding the most effective treatment may take time. Working as a team with your doctor is the best path to finding the right treatment for you.

Websites for further information on this topic

<http://www.vh.org/adult/patient/neurology/epilepsy/>

- questions about the diagnosis and treatment of epilepsy

http://www.epilepsy.com/info/family_faq.html

- questions regarding children

http://my.webmd.com/content/pages/11/1812_50854?z=1812_50850_6415_nd_04

- 10 important questions to ask your doctor

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www.epilepsydurham.com

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