

Exercise and epileptic seizures

It is extremely rare for a person to have a seizure while exercising. Rather than triggering seizures, your epilepsy may improve with exercise. Although the reasons are unclear, studies demonstrate that abnormalities on EEG (a test that measures the electrical activity of the brain) decrease during exercise.

Overall fitness and a feeling of wellbeing have been shown to help reduce seizure frequency. People feel better and may improve their seizure control with regular exercise. One report suggests that exercise improves self-esteem and social integration regardless of seizure control. It has also been shown that regular exercise reduces the number of overall health complaints, such as muscle pains, sleep problems, depression and fatigue.

Most sports activities are safe as long as people avoid overexertion, dehydration and hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar). If a seizure occurs, it is most likely to be after the exercise (15 minutes to three hours later).

Exercise safety issues and epilepsy

Be guided by your doctor, but general safety considerations include:

- Before starting any new exercise program, consult with your doctor or specialist.
- Pre-exercise screening is used to identify people with medical conditions that may put them at a higher risk of experiencing a health problem during physical activity. It is a filter or 'safety net' to help decide if the potential benefits of exercise outweigh the risks for you. Print a copy of the [pre-exercise screening tool](#) and discuss it with your doctor or exercise professional.
- Avoid known seizure triggers.
- Always take your medication as prescribed and have an adequate supply available.
- Stay well-hydrated and drink or snack on something with sugar in it.
- **Don't** continue exercising if you feel faint, lightheaded, nauseous or dehydrated.
- **Don't** overexert yourself – know your limits.
- Make sure your coach and possibly teammates are aware of your condition and know what to do if you have a seizure.
- If involved in solo exercise, consider wearing a medical alert bracelet or pendant, so people can easily identify you have epilepsy.
- Wear protective gear appropriate to your sport, such as a helmet or knee pads.
- Always wear a life jacket when involved in water sports.
- Let family or friends know your walking, jogging or exercise route before you leave and how long you will be out.

- Consider carrying a mobile phone with an ICE (in case of emergency) telephone number listed.

Exercise-related epilepsy triggers

It is important to exercise sensibly. You could trigger a seizure minutes or hours after exercise if you unnecessarily strain your body. Exercise-related risk factors could include:

- Extreme fatigue
- Lack of sleep
- Dehydration (and electrolyte loss, due to severe dehydration)
- Hyperthermia (elevated body temperature)
- Hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar levels).

Suggestions to help you avoid these triggers include:

- Make sure you take your medication according to your doctor's directions.
- Drink plenty of water before, during and after exercise.
- Don't push yourself to the point of physical exhaustion.
- If you are feeling very hot and tired, slow down or stop.
- Make sure you have at least two rest days every week.
- Make sure your diet is nutritionally adequate.
- Get plenty of rest and good quality sleep.
- Limit or abstain from alcohol.