

Managing Daily Activities

How can I help plan or prepare meals/food?

Having a balanced diet and good nutrition are important for seizure management and control. Meal planning and preparing meals can help you do this. Consider these tips below.

- Ask the butcher to cut your meat.
- Buy vegetables that are precut.
- Remember the importance of drinking water and other nonalcoholic drinks. Dehydration can lead to an increase in seizures.
- When cooking, consider using slow cookers, electric steamers, electric frying pans, air fryers, and microwaves. Avoid using deep fryers, grills, or fires.
- When preparing food, slide hot food containers on the counter and chop foods using a food processor.

Why is it important to keep my living environment clean?

Having a clean home decreases your chances of getting sick. A clean home is one way to help manage your epilepsy and improve your overall health.

Consider these tips below.

- Start with small steps, so you don't feel overwhelmed.
- Begin with one area and spend 30 minutes a day in that area.
- When cooking clean up as you go and after meals put dishes away, so they do not pile up.
- Divide weekly chores throughout the week.

Where can I shop for food and other household items without having to drive?

A common challenge for people with epilepsy is the inability to drive. This makes shopping for household items, necessities, clothes, food, medications,

and other items difficult. Using neighborhood grocery and pharmacy stores is very helpful. The expansion of online shopping adds more options to help address this need.

Tips for shopping:

- Walk to the store for items and use a backpack or a roller cart to bring items back.
- Look into options such as ordering online, over the phone, or by a phone app.
- If you use state food assistance programs such as SNAP, EBT or food stamps look for stores that accept them.
- Consider using companies that deliver packaged meals, although this may be an expensive option.
- When a friend, relative, or co-worker is shopping go with them or give them your list to shop for you.
- Request a 90-day supply of medications from your doctor so you don't need to refill medications as often.

How does epilepsy affect school or having a job?

There are laws to protect people with disabilities and epilepsy is included in this group.

- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) stops employers from discriminating against people with epilepsy. With ADA an employer cannot legally fire anyone because of epilepsy.
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) ensures that children with disabilities get additional assistance in schools and with transition planning for after high school.

In public schools (K-12) a person with epilepsy can have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or a Section 504 (504 Plan). Some sample accommodations in IEPs or 504s include:

- The ability to record talks

- Increased time for tests
- Using notes in tests
- Testing in a separate room
- Rescheduling tests because of a seizure
- Allowing recovery time for a seizure

Within the IEP or 504 Plan, there is transition planning that starts prior to the student turning 16. This will explore options for after high school such as college, vocational training, and independent living skills.

Similar accommodations can be requested for work. These are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and depend on the type of work and the person's epilepsy. Employers cannot refuse to hire someone based on epilepsy, nor can they ask if you have epilepsy in an interview. There are pros and cons with disclosing epilepsy at different times, which need to be made on an individual basis.

For more information on IDEA, IEP, Section 504, and the transition process access:

- <https://epilepsymichigan.org/page.php?id=363>
- https://www.epilepsy.com/sites/core/files/atoms/files/IDEA%206-24-14_0.pdf

For more information on ADA and accommodations access:

- <https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/epilepsy.cfm>
- <https://askjan.org/disabilities/Epilepsy-Seizure-Disorder.cfm>
- <https://www.epilepsy.com/living-epilepsy/independent-living/employment/reasonable-accommodations>

For more information on vocational training options access:

- Michigan Career and Technical Institute
 - https://www.michigan.gov/leo/0,5863,7-336-94422_96832---,00.html
- Michigan Rehabilitation Services

- https://www.michigan.gov/leo/0,5863,7-336-94422_97702---,00.html
- https://www.michigan.gov/documents/choosing_your_future_97699_7.pdf

For more information on work accommodations:

- <https://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/epilepsy.cfm>
- <https://www.epilepsy.com/living-epilepsy/independent-living/employment-help-what-you-need-know>

What activities am I not allowed to do?

Do not engage in activities where you could injure yourself or someone else if you were to unexpectedly have a seizure or loss of consciousness. There may be times when you could do these activities in the presence of someone else who knows you have seizures. Some examples of these activities include (but are not limited to) taking a tub bath, swimming, operating power tools, climbing ladders/heights, and some types of cooking such as using the stovetop or grilling. It is best to discuss possible activities and their risks with your neurologist.

How long do I have to be seizure free before I am allowed to drive a car?

The length of time needed to be seizure-free or free from any loss of consciousness in order to drive varies by state. In Michigan, a person needs to be seizure-free for 6 months, which is the typical length of time in most states. Some states require documentation from your doctor while other states do not. The best option is to discuss this with your neurologist and call your local secretary of state.

For more information on driving and epilepsy regulations:

- <https://www.epilepsy.com/driving-laws>
- Visit your state's specific secretary of state website

Where can I get financial help?

- To find scholarship opportunities visit the Epilepsy Foundation website (www.epilepsy.com) and the Epilepsy Foundation of Michigan website (www.epilepsymichigan.org). These sites have listings of national and local scholarship opportunities including the Dakota Pequeno Memorial Scholarships. You can also look into scholarship and grant options from the college you will be attending.
- If you are unable to work, you may qualify for social security disability benefits.
 - Visit <https://www.ssa.gov/disability/> to learn more.
 - The social worker in the clinic can also provide guidance around the steps to apply for social security disability. To talk with the social worker, request your doctor place a referral to social work.

Glossary

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990

This law applies to employers who have 15 or more employees. The act states that reasonable accommodations need to be made for people who have disabilities. Through this act it is unlawful for employers to discriminate against people based on disabilities.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

This law states that all children, regardless of disabilities have a right to free and appropriate public education (FAPE) with the least amount of restrictions. This is a federal law supporting special education services to youth with disabilities.

Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Each IEP is based on each individual's needs and goals. This is a legal document that provides special instruction, services, and supports that a child needs to achieve school goals. This includes accommodations as well as direct services such as occupation therapy, speech therapy, social work, and supplementary aids. This is a special education law that falls under IDEA.

Section 504 (504 Plan)

This is similar to an IEP because the goal is to provide students with disabilities access to education. A big difference is that in a 504 Plan there are accommodations to help a student make progress in school towards their goals, but there are no direct services provided. The goal of a 504 plan is to try to remove barriers from learning, giving equal access to education.

Food assistance programs such as SNAP, EBT, or food stamps

Low-income households may be eligible for a food assistance program through the Department of Human Services. The easiest way to apply is to go online, but you can also go to your local DHS office. If you are eligible you will receive this assistance every month.

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