

Fact Sheet 15

Epilepsy and Memory

Dealing with memory issues is challenging for most people at some point in their lives, and for people with epilepsy it is not unusual. Memory loss can occur because of seizure activity within the brain, which disrupts memory processes, and sometimes because of the use of anti-epileptic drugs (AEDs) which can cause drowsiness or attention problems. In most cases AEDs control seizures, which helps improve memory.

Any type of epileptic seizure could potentially affect memory during and after a seizure, but the most common reason for memory loss is abnormalities in the temporal and frontal lobes. The length of time it takes to regain memory after a seizure varies from person to person, and in some cases the memory can be permanently affected.

Memory allows us to retain things that we have learnt, selecting the relevant information we need, discarding that which is irrelevant and encoding the information in categories. We are then able to store that information and retrieve it when needed. However, during an epileptic seizure that natural process of inputting and retrieving information is interfered with. The more seizure activity a person has means that he or she is likely to experience more memory issues. The use of AEDs helps to minimise that memory disruption by controlling seizure activity.

Practical tips for managing memory problems

1. Write down ideas, suggestions, dates, appointments, information etc. in a small notebook which is carried at all times.
2. Have a "To Do" list which records daily tasks, people to contact, bills to pay etc.
3. Mark down appointments, birthdays, and important events down on a calendar.
4. Attach messages to your front door to remind you of something important.
5. Use your phone alarm to remind you when to take medication or appointments.
6. Use your phone for GPS readings of where you are travelling and where you live.
7. Organise your medication in a weekly pill box. (These are available at the chemist.)
8. Ask for phone call appointment reminders from your doctors, hair dressers etc.
9. Ask friends for reminder

How to make those neurons work!

1. Meet up with old and new friends for stimulating conversations and emotional support. Social interactions boost brain functions requiring memory and attention.
2. Learn a new skill, hobby, or language.
3. Join a social or sports or hobby group, or book club, or night class.
4. Speed up the time it takes for you to solve crosswords, Sudoku, Scrabble, word finds, etc.
5. Play online games such as Tetris.
6. Do a jigsaw puzzle to improve coordination and spatial thinking.
7. Harness your long-term memory by going through old photo albums and focusing on the positive. Scrapbooking is a way of preserving those precious memories.
8. See a problem as a challenge to be conquered by breaking it down into achievable steps so that you are not overwhelmed. Seek help. "A problem shared is a problem halved."
9. Play memory games, like the one below. You can play it on your own or with others. Give yourself a time limit.

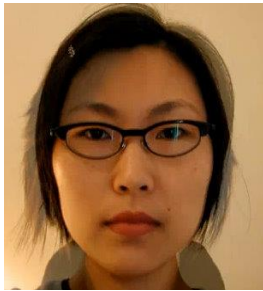
Choose a random letter of the alphabet	Country name	Capital city	Language	Animal	Plant	Boy's name	Girl's name
e.g. H	Hungary	Helsinki	Hindi	Hare	Hydrangeas	Harry	Harriet

10. Choose a long word out of a magazine or newspaper and see how many smaller words you can make from it. e.g. **Performance** (perform, man, or, form, for, romance, pane, ran, prance, reef, face, perm, ace, ram...)
11. Get plenty of sleep for your age.
12. Eat well
13. Have a positive outlook and enjoy life

Face and Name Game

Do you have difficulties remembering faces and names? Try this little activity and practice doing it in real-life. Be discrete! Have fun.

Here are some photos of people with their names.



Alice



Holly



Pete

1. Choose a face.
2. Describe that person to yourself. Mention hair colour/style, facial features, glasses, earrings etc.
3. Repeat the name of the person, as often as possible. Write his/her name down.
4. Hide the photo and see how much you can remember.
5. Draw it on the face shape below. How much can you remember about that person?

Name:

