My seizures have now stopped with my new medication but I have lost so much weight my doctor wants to take me off it. Is there anything I can use to put weight on because I don't want to change medication?

People with epilepsy are more likely than most of the general population to suffer from either weight gain and weight loss, particularly in relation to their medication. This is a real dilemma in situations like this, where the medication is very effective in controlling seizures. Ongoing weight loss is going to be detrimental to your overall health, which may result in the seizures returning. It may be worth discussing this issue with your neurologist and a dietician and see if you can come to an agreement regarding your diet – to prevent any further weight loss, and possibly even gain some weight – to avoid having to change medication.

Where can I find some good easy-to-understand books about epilepsy?

There are numerous different books about epilepsy. You will find many of them online. Please visit our website www.epilepsy.org.au looking under Resources-Products for some examples, or you may want to go to Google Books and search “epilepsy” which will bring up thousands of results – all of which you can preview.

I get scared when my brother has a seizure. Why do the teachers get me when it happens?

If your brother is having seizures at school, then the staff should be trained how to respond to this so they do not need to call you on every occasion. Epilepsy Action Australia can provide this education, clearing up any misunderstandings about epilepsy, explaining what to do and putting clear instructions in place. We can also sit down with the staff and discuss a Seizure Management Plan. It is quite normal to be frightened of seizures as they can be scary to witness. If you think learning a bit more about epilepsy and what to do in case of a seizure will also help you, then we are happy to provide you with some help and information.

Can I still do gymnastics with epilepsy?

The majority of physical activities or sports are safe for people with epilepsy with special attention to seizure control, close monitoring of medications, and preparation of family, team-mates or coaches. Evidence shows that people with good seizure control can undertake contact and non-contact sports without harmfully affecting seizure frequency. Most forms of exercise can actually be of great benefit. Although there are rare cases of seizures induced by exercise, only 2% of people with epilepsy have genuine exercise-induced seizures and for 30-40%, regular physical exercise may have a moderate seizure preventative effect. Studies have shown that physical activity can decrease seizure frequency, as well as leading to improved cardiovascular and psychological health in people with epilepsy.

I told my new boyfriend that I sometimes don’t feel well when I am overtired and sometimes do strange things but didn’t really tell him I have epilepsy. I am meeting his family soon and don’t know how to tell him. I’m worried. How will he react? Will he become overprotective or freak out? Will he tell his family? What if we break up? I don’t want his family to talk about me and say ‘you know, that girl with epilepsy you dated.’ Any advice?

Telling people that you have epilepsy can be very difficult, particularly when it is a new partner. Many people fear rejection. A good time to talk about epilepsy might be when you have already established an early friendship and when you are able to talk with each other about things deeper than general chit-chat topics. When you and your boyfriend start to talk more about personal issues, it is a good sign your relationship is at the right stage for a discussion about your epilepsy.

Bring it up and let your boyfriend guide you as to how much you discuss it. Don’t attempt to tell him everything about your epilepsy all at once as this can be a bit too much to absorb. A little bit at a time is a good idea. If he wants to know more, he will most likely ask you questions and this will keep the conversation going. No questions are a good cue to switch to other subjects for now. Start with telling your boyfriend and gauge his reaction. It is not necessary to tell his family straight away. Depending on your boyfriend’s relationship with his parents, he may or may not tell them. You will probably know yourself when the time is right.