

# MEN AND EPILEPSY

## FACT SHEET



# MEN AND EPILEPSY

## The impact of having epilepsy can differ between men and women.

In Australian culture, men are often less likely to focus on their health. Many only see a doctor when something becomes serious. For men with epilepsy, this can mean that their seizures may not be as well controlled as they could be.

Regular check-ups and talking openly with your doctor can make a difference in managing seizures and improving overall health.



### Starting medication

Epilepsy medicines are usually started at a low dose and increased slowly. It can take weeks or even months to find the right medication and the best dose for you.

During this time, it helps to keep a diary of your seizures, symptoms, and any side effects.

If your first medication doesn't control seizures, or has intolerable side-effects, your doctor may try another. Sometimes two medications are used together. Finding the right balance can take time.



### Medication side-effects

Unwanted effects or side-effects, often occur when starting a medication. They should lessen or disappear after the first few weeks of treatment, but you should tell your doctor if the side-effects persist, are intolerable or are listed as serious.

In these cases, the medication dose may be lowered or withdrawn, and the unwanted symptoms will usually resolve. Always:

- Read the manufacturer's instructions (this should come in the box)
- Take your medication as prescribed.
- Check what medications or preparations may interact with your medication
- Know what to do if you miss a dose

**Seizures can affect many parts of daily life, and some activities can also affect seizures. This includes things like sport and exercise, social activities, alcohol use, driving, work, and relationships.**

# MOOD



Many people with epilepsy report changes in mood, such as feeling low, anxious, or irritable. In fact, people with epilepsy are much more likely to experience depression and anxiety, than those without epilepsy.

This does not mean everyone will have these challenges, but it does highlight the importance of recognising and addressing mental health alongside seizure control.

Mood changes in people with epilepsy may be a direct effect of seizures, a side effect of medication, or a response to the challenges of living with epilepsy.

When epilepsy and mental health conditions occur together, it can affect seizure control. People with both epilepsy and a mood disorder may find it harder to manage their seizures or stay motivated to follow treatment plans.

This can reduce quality of life and create a cycle that's hard to break without help.

Epilepsy can also affect confidence and self-esteem, especially in young men which can further impact mental health and wellbeing.

It's normal to sometimes feel tired, moody, worried, angry, or sad. But if these feelings continue for a long time or start to impact your daily life, it's important to talk to someone and seek help early. Talk to your GP, neurologist, or epilepsy nurse.

Your risk of experiencing depression or anxiety can be higher if:

- your seizures aren't fully controlled
- you have temporal lobe epilepsy, or
- there is a family history of epilepsy

## Ways to support your mood

- ⑩ Focus on seizure control: Take your medication as prescribed and make healthy lifestyle choices to help reduce seizures.
- ⑩ Be open with your doctor: Be honest about your seizures and how you're feeling. This helps your doctor find the best treatment for you.
- ⑩ Manage stress: Stress worsen seizures, and mood. Try breathing techniques, mindfulness, or ask for advice. There's plenty of options.
- ⑩ Seek help if needed: If you think you may have depression, or if low mood and low self-esteem persist, talk to your GP.
- ⑩ Stay connected: Find an activity you enjoy - hobbies, volunteering, or joining a group, can boost your mood and connect you with others.
- ⑩ Give back: Helping someone else can lift your spirits and build confidence.
- ⑩ Learn more about epilepsy: Understanding your condition gives you more control and can reduce anxiety.



**Looking after your mental health is just as important as managing seizures.**

## EXERCISE

Regular physical activity has many benefits. It can improve sleep, reduce stress, and even help with seizure control. Sport is also great for your physical health, mental wellbeing, and social life.

Don't avoid exercise because of fear of seizures. With some common-sense precautions, most people with epilepsy can enjoy sport safely.



### Tips for playing sport safely

- Tell someone you trust (a coach, teammate, or exercise partner) about your seizures and what to do if one occurs.
- Think about your triggers and the chance of having a seizure during an activity.
- Plan for safety—ask yourself: If I have a seizure while doing this, what could happen?
- Avoid high-risk activities such as scuba diving, skydiving, mountain climbing, bungee jumping, motor racing, or hang gliding.
- Once seizures are controlled, most sports are safe to enjoy.
- The general rule: if losing consciousness during the activity could put your life in danger, it's best to avoid it. Contact sports can be OK but wearing protective headgear is recommended.
- *Always talk with your doctor about the types of sport or recreation that are right for you and how to reduce risks*

## EMPLOYMENT



Men with epilepsy often face higher rates of unemployment or underemployment. This can create both financial and emotional stress. Job security and meaningful work are often closely linked to men's overall health and wellbeing.

What you can do:

- **Talk to your employer (if safe to do so):**  
Sharing information about your seizures and how they can be managed at work may feel daunting, especially if you're worried about job security. However, employers have a duty of care to keep you and your colleagues safe.
- **Provide practical information:**  
Many people know little about epilepsy. Offering clear, useful information can help your employer understand how to support you.
- **Have an epilepsy management plan:**  
A written plan ensures seizures are handled safely and appropriately in the workplace.
- **Know your rights:**  
Employers must make reasonable adjustments to support you. Discrimination in the workplace is not allowed.
- **Be open to role changes if needed:**  
For example, if your job involves driving, there are restrictions on when you can return to driving after a seizure.
- **Think about retraining:**  
Depending on your seizure control and current role, retraining might provide new opportunities.
- **Seek expert advice:**  
Specialist employment services can help if you are unable to continue in your current role.



See our [Employment Factsheet](#) for more information

# SEIZURES AND HORMONES

**Testosterone is the key male sex hormone, essential for reproductive and sexual function. It also supports bone and muscle health, mood, libido (sex drive), and mental sharpness.**

When the body can't produce enough testosterone, it's called *androgen deficiency*. It's relatively uncommon in the general population, but often affects men with epilepsy. Men with epilepsy, especially those with focal or temporal lobe epilepsy, are at higher risk of low testosterone levels. This is treatable and not life-threatening

Symptoms can include:

- Fatigue or low energy
- Mood changes, irritability
- Poor concentration
- Reduced muscle strength
- Low sex drive (libido)
- These symptoms overlap with side effects of some antiseizure medications, so timing and context (e.g., onset after starting therapy) are important for understanding the cause

## Can puberty trigger or change epilepsy?

Puberty doesn't cause epilepsy. However, seizures can change at this time, and some epilepsy syndromes either begin or improve during adolescence. For example, Juvenile Myoclonic Epilepsy or Juvenile Absence Epilepsy often emerge during teenage years.

## Does epilepsy affect sexual function?

Physical and medical conditions, such as epilepsy, and their treatments can contribute to sexual dysfunction. This can be a complex disorder with medical, psychological and life circumstances all playing a part.

The sexual concerns most reported by people with epilepsy include wanting sex less often, not becoming as excited as usual and difficulty getting or maintaining an erection (impotence).

For most men, the cause can be both physical and psychological.

Both seizures or medications might make you lack energy and feel tired or fatigued, which can contribute to a loss of interest in sexual activity.

Many health conditions can contribute to sexual difficulties.

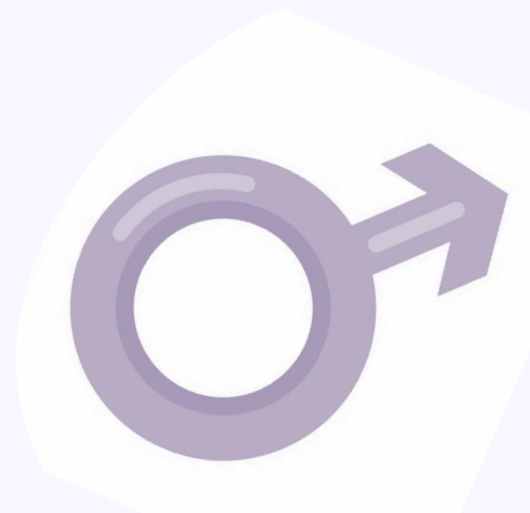
Alcohol or drug use, including some prescribed drugs, can affect also sexual function.

Rarely, some antiseizure medications cause impotence, but they are not usually the sole cause.

Psychological causes of sexual difficulties are varied and can include factors such as stress and anxiety, concern about seizures, sexual performance, relationship problems, depression, guilt, self-consciousness and the effects of a past trauma.

**Because sexual difficulties are uncomfortable to discuss, people often let them go for too long and begin feeling inadequate and depressed.**

**Effective treatments are available, and many problems can be corrected by treating the underlying physical, medical or psychological causes.**



Issue	What Does it Mean?	What You Can Do
Puberty and epilepsy	Some seizure syndromes emerge or change during adolescence. Some seizure types may remit.	Monitor seizure patterns; seek specialist advice
Sexual dysfunction	Includes low libido, erectile issues linked to hormones, seizures, meds, and psychological factors	Review medication, support mental health, ask for a referral to therapy or counselling
Low testosterone	Common in men with epilepsy, especially temporal lobe epilepsy or taking two or more antiseizure medications. It not only affects you physically, it also affects your mental health and emotional wellbeing. <a href="#">See here for some symptoms</a>	Ask your doctor to get your hormone levels checked. Consider a medication review.
Mood and mental health	Depression and anxiety are more common in people with epilepsy. It can be linked to seizures, medication, and life and social impacts	Seek professional support, consider counselling/therapy, review medication, connect with others with epilepsy
Self management	Lifestyle, mood, sleep, and stress affect both hormones and seizures	Prioritise sleep and stick to a routine as much as possible, manage stress, eat well, and stay active.

If you or someone you know is living with epilepsy and has symptoms that may be hormone-related, here are a few steps to consider:

Keep track of symptoms such as fatigue, mood changes, or changes in seizure activity. This helps to identify patterns that may help inform clinical decisions.

Discuss concerns with your doctor or healthcare provider. Don't hesitate to ask questions about how hormones could be affecting your epilepsy or how epilepsy could be affecting your hormones.

Stay active and eat a balanced diet. Exercise and nutrition play a key role in maintaining hormonal balance and helps physical and mental health.

Prioritise sleep and manage stress. Both poor sleep and chronic stress can negatively impact hormones, sexual function and increase seizure risk.



**Visit our website**

Contact us on:

Phone: 1300 37 45 37

Email: [epilepsy@epilepsy.org.au](mailto:epilepsy@epilepsy.org.au)

[Book a telehealth booking with an epilepsy nurse](#)