

## Memory

### There are many different factors affecting Memory

These include:

1. The underlying cause of the epilepsy
2. Frequency and severity of the seizure
3. Undetected seizure activity (sub-clinical)
4. Psychosocial factors (mood / drugs / expectations and frustrations)

### Triggers for Memory Loss Behaviour

- Injury to the brain
- Duration and frequency of seizure activity
- Medication side effects
- Dizziness
- Depression
- Agoraphobia
- Repetitive behaviour
- Panic attacks
- Palpitations
- Sweaty palms
- Anxiety

### Strategies

The obvious and easiest way to administer handy strategies to assist you in day to day living are:

- Diaries
- Calendar messages
- Coloured stickers (in areas most visible, e.g. fridge, bathroom mirror)
- Organiser / calculator
- Pin board
- Lists – daily
- Placing items like keys and personal belongings in a familiar spot / control area, e.g. glass bowl / basket
- Alarm watch
- Switching ring fingers
- Elastic on wrist
- Alphabet

How to give your memory a helping hand!

If you are worried about memory lapses, experts suggest the following:

- Speak with your doctor. A change of medication or the time of day you take your medicine might help.
- Make lists of things you plan to do each day; rely on routine and order.
- Keep notes of telephone calls, important conversations and appointments. Pick one place to store your reminders, and stick with that spot.
- Think positive. Put effort into listening and storing your memories.
- Take care of yourself. If you are tired your brain isn't going to work as well as when you are rested.
- Stay active socially and intellectually. If you aren't stimulating yourself mentally or physically, your mental processes are more likely to deteriorate.
- Be honest with friends and family members. Talk to everyone about the memory lapses.
- Don't give up. Be ready to re-learn.

Dawn C Lassiter "In Touch" Spring '97

From Epilepsy Association of South Australia and ACT website

<http://www.epilepsyassociation.com.au/info/topicsinterest/memory.html>

### Complementary medicine

Unfortunately there has been little scientific research into how effective complementary therapies are for epilepsy but some people have reported finding them helpful. However, certain essential oils or herbal remedies such as evening primrose oil, hyssop, St John's Wort, rosemary, sage and sweet fennel are harmful to people with epilepsy and should be avoided.

Before using a complementary therapy discuss it first with your doctor. In addition, find a qualified practitioner in the therapy you are interested in and tell them you have epilepsy. Complementary therapies are 'complementary' and not an 'alternative' to antiepileptic medication. **This means you should continue taking your medications as prescribed.**

**Sudden withdrawal of medication can lead to increased seizures as well as putting yourself at risk of status epilepticus [prolonged seizures] which can result in brain damage or death. Antiepileptic medication should only be withdrawn under medical supervision.**

For more information on alternative and complementary therapies ask your local epilepsy association.

Appleton, R., Gibbs, J. (1995) *Epilepsy in Childhood and Adolescence*  
London: Martin Dunitz Ltd

Beran, R. (1997) *EPILEPSY – Facts about Fits*  
Sydney: McLennan & Petty Pty Ltd

Buchanan, N. (1989) *Epilepsy Questions and Answers*  
Artarmon, N.S.W: MacLennon & Petty Pty Ltd

Evaluating Epilepsy pamphlet: (1998) *National Epilepsy Association Pamphlet*

Freeman, J., Vining, E., Pillas, D. (199–) *Seizures and Epilepsy in Childhood*  
Baltimore: John Hopkins Universtiy Press

Gram, L., Dam, M. (1995) *Epilepsy Explained*  
Copenhagen: Munksgaard

Hanscomb, A., Hughes, L. (1995) *Family Health Guide – EPILEPSY*  
London: Ward Lock

Hopkins, A., Appleton, R. (1996) *Epilepsy – the facts 2nd edition*  
Oxford: Oxford University Press

Little, A. (2002) *Epilepsy – a resource for teachers*  
Epilepsy Queensland

Lennox, N. (1999) *Management Guidelines People with Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities*  
Melbourne: Therapeutic Guidelines Ltd

Pollard, R., Chapman, D. (2002) *Epifile – An Epilepsy Management Manual*  
Melbourne: Epilepsy Australia

Schachter, S., Schomer, D. (1997) *The Comprehensive Evaluation and Treatment of Epilepsy – A practical Guide*  
London: Academic Press

Walker, M., Shorvon, S., Somerville, E. (2000) *The Australian Medical Association Home Medical Guide to Epilepsy*  
Sydney: Dorling Kindersley.

Website of Epilepsy Ontario <http://epilepsyontario.org/faqs/P-T/stages.html> Posted 17th May 2001

Website of British Epilepsy Association <http://www.epilepsy.org.uk/info/parntfrm.html> Updated 2003

Wolf, P. (1994) *Epileptic Seizures and Syndromes*  
London: John Libbey & Company Ltd