

**This issue is about the effects of epilepsy on memory and how to work around the barriers these struggles with memory can create.**

### How does epilepsy affect memory?

What is it about epilepsy that affects memory, the answer would seem obvious; memory and epilepsy live in the same part of the body so they are going to meet eventually. But how does it work? Howe et al. (2006) report that across the various studies into the relationship between memory and epilepsy, the common conclusion is that there is a negative impact on memory as a result of long term epilepsy with frequent seizure activity. There is a debate between publishers on the level of negative effect on memory, but all literature agrees it is present.

There was also a report that evidence suggests that if seizures are originating mostly in the left temporal lobe, verbal memory issues become quite apparent. If the seizures are originating mostly in the right temporal lobe, issues with nonverbal and visuospatial (remembering where objects are within a space or place) memory are most commonly reported

### How to work around memory issues

There are many people who live with epilepsy that struggle with the feelings of anger and frustration when thoughts, conversations, tasks and memories slip away like sand through your fingers.

There are ways to retain those memories, keep track of your thoughts tasks at hand; you just need to make some adjustments to your approach to everyday life.

Below is listed some potential ideas for you helping yourself “grasp” those memories, and give you back some more control of how you live your life.

- Get a medicine counter with days of the week and time slots if needed, because the first step to memory control is seizure control, and for most

people with epilepsy that means sticking to a regular medicine schedule. Anyone who has had a seizure knows that in terms of remembering something, all you get is a blank slate or fuzzy at best. To help with this, pharmacies offer a blister packaging service for a small fee, which clearly separates and marks out days and doses, making remembering a much easier task. To get this service, simply ask your pharmacist when you take your script in.

- Paper and pens/pencils are your most faithful companions when having an important conversation, setting tasks for an hour/ day/week and so on. Having a large wall calendar doesn't hurt either. Also mark off what you have completed so you don't panic, thinking you've forgotten it.
- Have set places for specific things i.e. keys always go on the hook by the door, hospital appointment letters are always on the bedside table, over time it just becomes ingrained into your brain.
- Set alarms on your phone/ watch/computer that describes what the alarm is for, so when it goes off, you'll remember why.
- Tell other people what's going on in your life so if you forget, they can remind you.
- Don't get down on yourself and stress out about forgetting things. If you are stressing out about your memory constantly you will defeat yourself by ending up having more seizures and affecting your memory further.

## Reference

Howe, S. R., Kent, G. P., Privitera, M. D., Schefft, B.K., Szaflarski, J.P. & Yeh, H.S., (2006). The effects of duration of intractable epilepsy on memory function. *Epilepsy & Behaviour*, 9(3), 469-477.