

Children and Anti-Seizure Medication (ASMs)

The first line of treatment for epilepsy is usually the use of anti-seizure medication (ASM) also known as anti-epileptic drugs (AEDs). These medicines are generally taken 1-2 times a day. The decision of whether to put your child on medication is a serious and important one, and is not taken lightly. Most doctors will tend to avoid prescribing medication until the child has experienced at least two seizures.

The treating doctor will discuss with you the benefits and risks of taking medication. The doctor will also consult with you about which ASMs may be suitable for treating your child's particular form of epilepsy, including any possible side-effects. For most children, the benefits of taking ASMs are greater than the possible side-effects.

Finding the right medication takes time, and can be an ongoing process. It is very important that your child's seizures are under control to ensure their safety, but also that side effects are managed and their quality of life is enhanced. It is possible that the first ASM will not be the right one and replaced with another, and dosages may have to be adjusted to control or reduce seizure activity. Medication dosage may also change as your child grows. Sometimes, a combination of drugs are required as part of your child's treatment plan.

Treatment is usually ongoing until the child achieves at least two years of seizure freedom. Depending on the child's epilepsy syndrome and any known causes of the condition, the doctor may discuss withdrawing the medication. Sometimes the doctor will order a repeat EEG before withdrawing medication, although a normal EEG does not guarantee remission.