EPILEPSY NEW ZEALAND
*Kia titiro ki te tangata | See the person*

# Education and schooling



1 in 200 students in New Zealand live with epilepsy, and most experience successful pathways through primary and secondary education. As a parent or guardian, you want to know that your child is in safe hands, is getting the best education and is able to participate in all school and community activities to the best of their capabilities.

Your child may have an epilepsy diagnosis, but you may not consider that they have a disability. However, under the discrimination law framework, the definition of disability is stated broadly. Having an epilepsy diagnosis would be considered a disability in the context of discrimination law, as would other medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes and arthritis.

Some schools will ask for an appropriate emergency first aid response and post-seizure support when a student has a seizure, based on his/her Seizure Management Plans (SMP). However, as epilepsy can involve several challenges that extend beyond the seizure itself, some additional preparation may be necessary to ensure that your child is confident and capable of participating in school life. In many cases, this requires additional planning, conversation and understanding between children with epilepsy, their parents, peers, teachers and the school community.

Thankfully, there are various resources and training available that can empower a school community to support and include your child, as well as promote awareness about epilepsy. Our Education staff are able to provide support for the school. Please contact us to find out what we are able to offer in your region.

While every person's epilepsy and educational journey is unique, obstacles commonly faced by children with epilepsy at schools include:

- Not being able to participate in activities, such as sports and camps
- Missing classes/ school days
- Embarrassment due to seizures, seizure behaviours or accidents
- Anxiety, depression and moodiness, including anger and frustration related to seizures or

medication.

Epilepsy can also impact on a child's cognition and learning. For example, they might experience:

- Cognitive overload (e.g., finding it hard to keep up at school), which can cause seizures
- Seizures that can also make it difficult to concentrate and remember new information
- Memory difficulties as a side effect of medication
- Impacts related to a co-existing developmental condition (e.g. autism).

Beyond seizures and medication, epilepsy can have a broader impact on a child's quality of life and experiences at school. For example:

- Children with epilepsy have higher rates of depression and anxiety, especially among those with more complicated epilepsy
- Parents perceived levels of stigma, low mood and worry, and unmet needs for information and support can impact behavioural difficulties in children with epilepsy
- Parents of children with epilepsy have also been found to have lower quality of life and higher levels of anxiety and depression compared to parents of healthy children
- Epilepsy sometimes co-exists with other developmental conditions, such as autism, intellectual disability, and cerebral palsy.

While epilepsy can have a significant impact on your child's experience at school, the available support and resources can help you manage their educational journey and achieve positive outcomes.

If your child has complex seizures or has other pre-existing conditions, find out if he/she is eligible for funding or support.

Funding is allocated to students receiving support through:

- ORS (ongoing resource scheme)
- School High Health Needs Fund
- In-Class Support
- Behaviour Services, and
- Communication Services.

Find out more here


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