

Talking to your child about their epilepsy

Children living with epilepsy need a combination of emotional, social and practical support from their parents and family.

Positive self-esteem is a crucial part of growing up. Just like in any other child, focusing on the child's strengths and providing encouragement goes a long way. Being involved in discussions about their health can also give them confidence to face new challenges, although it is also important to be wary of information that might cause confusion or anxiety. The treating doctor, and possibly a psychologist, will be able to provide more specific guidance about what is appropriate for your child.

In general, it is important to:

- Be honest about your child's diagnosis, and what it means
- Adapt information to their developmental stage and level of understanding
- Try to keep discussions as positive as possible
- Encourage your child to ask questions about their epilepsy, as well as express their concerns or worries
- Reassure your child that their epilepsy is being managed
- Let your child know what to expect from their seizures, and where appropriate, any treatments or management plans that are in place
- Reassure your child that they are not alone. Sometimes, it can help to remind them that many children have conditions that can require lifestyle changes and medication (e.g. asthma or allergies)
- Reassure your child that their epilepsy is not their fault.

You may be nervous about talking to your child about their epilepsy, for fear of making them feel sad, worried or concerned. However, in the absence of conversation, a child with epilepsy may make incorrect assumptions about themselves, and ultimately it is better to talk things through with them.

Epilepsy New Zealand have free copies of the story book "Because You Are My Friend" in English and Maori.



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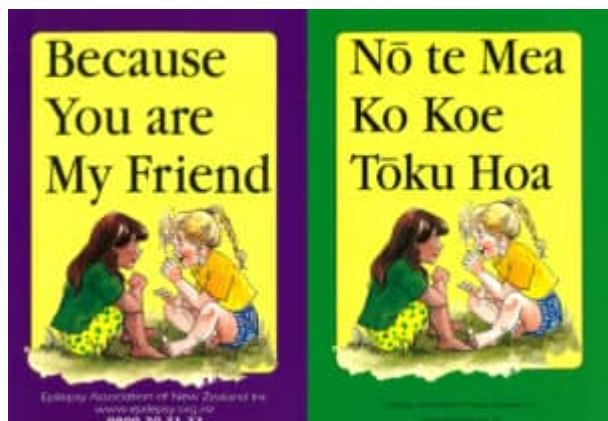


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