

# Travelling and epilepsy



*Older people living with epilepsy might be eligible for a discount card for public transport or for taxi services. Contact the appropriate public transport authority or taxi directorate to obtain more information.*

## Travelling and epilepsy in the later years

For many older people living with epilepsy, travelling away from the familiarity of home may be a daunting prospect; however, for most people, with a little planning, it will be achievable.

A person living with epilepsy or seizures may be eligible to hold a driver licence for private vehicles as long as their seizures are well-controlled. The ability of a person with epilepsy to hold a driver licence, at any age, depends on the likelihood of them having a seizure while driving and the impact of a seizure on their ability to drive.

## What does this mean for the older person?

### When travelling or going on holidays

There are a number of measures that can be taken to ensure that time away is enjoyable and safe. Here are some tips to consider before travelling:

- Medication must be taken at the usual times.
- Take a doctor's letter detailing the epilepsy diagnosis, the name of the medications, how much is to be taken and that it is for personal use only, along with a copy of the prescriptions. It is best to keep the medication in its original packaging.



- Have enough prescriptions to cover the time away from home if travelling within New Zealand or overseas. If travelling overseas it may be difficult to obtain medication whilst in another country therefore in most cases it will be necessary to take enough medication to cover the entire journey.
- Pack medications in a clear plastic bag, stored in carry-on luggage. This will reduce the risk of the medications being lost in transit.
- Be aware of seizure triggers, e.g. jetlag, tiredness, dehydration.

### When licensed to drive

Any person who holds a current driver licence and develops any serious or chronic medical condition or disability including epilepsy and seizures, is required by law to report their condition to the relevant state driving authority. The authority will advise whether a medical report is required, if required it must be no more than six months old.

National driving guidelines for assessing fitness to drive outline the different circumstances under which driving may or may not be permitted for people living with epilepsy.

Assessing fitness to drive is managed separately by each state driving authority.

If there have not been any seizures for 12 months since the loss of licence, it may be possible to have the licence reinstated. The frequency of periodic reviews may vary depending on the medical report and the opinion of the state driving authority's medical advisors.

## What you can do to help

Some ways you can help include:

- Discuss with the person what to do with their medications while away from home – how much to take and what they need to do to manage their medication while travelling.
- Encourage the person to visit their doctor for a check up prior to leaving home.
- Assist the older person in completing the fitness to drive assessment.
- Provide support for an older person who may be overwhelmed or upset that they can no longer drive – possibly by referral to a counselling service.

## Further information

Epilepsy New Zealand

<http://epilepsy.org.nz/>



This information sheet is part of a suite of resources that are targeted to aged care workers and carers of older people, to assist with caring for older people living with epilepsy.

The information contained in this publication provides general information about epilepsy. It does not provide specific advice. Specific health and medical advice should always be obtained from an appropriately qualified health professional.

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