

# Memory and epilepsy



The impact of epilepsy is variable – some students are greatly affected while others are not.

**Memory is a complex process that occurs within our brain.**

**It allows us to store, retain and recall information and experiences.**

**Although not all students with epilepsy experience memory difficulties, it is one of the most common challenges faced by those living with epilepsy.**

## **Possible causes of memory difficulties**

- Left temporal lobe epilepsy can cause difficulty with verbal memory, while right temporal lobe epilepsy can cause difficulty with visual memory.
- Frontal lobe epilepsy can also produce memory problems.
- This can be due to difficulties with organising and structuring information or a short attention span.
- Medication can contribute to memory difficulties by affecting concentration and processing speed.
- Seizures themselves and the recovery period can also impede memory

## **Possible indicators of memory difficulties.**

- Difficulty matching names to faces or objects.
- Difficulty following and recalling instructions.
- Easily frustrated.
- Finds it difficult to stay on task due to losing track.
- Confused about what they are meant to be doing.
- Reluctant to participate in class activities/games.
- Reluctant to have a go at new tasks.
- Difficulty transferring learned skills to other settings.

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### How teachers can help

- Have a structured environment and routine wherever possible.
- Identify the student's preferred learning style and use it to support their learning.
- Always provide written instructions to support verbal instructions.
- Encourage the student to use organisational tools such as a daily timetable or diary.
- Allow for processing time when asking the student for a response.
- Practise and review new information and processes regularly.
- Provide the student with immediate and frequent feedback to encourage them to stay on task..



### Strategies to try

- Use computer program games/activities with repetitive components to build skills.
- Use diagrams, graphs and pictures to illustrate information.
- Break larger tasks down into short, sequential steps.
- Teach the student how to organise information into smaller units. e.g. 132563 into units of 13, 25, 63.
- Have the student practise repetition of information to increase short term memory skills, e.g. tables facts.



**EPILEPSY  
NEW ZEALAND**  
*Kia tīro ki te tangata / See the person*

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This fact sheet is part of a suite of resources that are targeted to both parents and teachers to assist students with epilepsy in the primary, secondary and special school settings. Special thanks to Dr Silvana Micallef, Snr Clinical Neuropsychologist, Austin Health, for her help in compiling this fact sheet.

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 a qualified health professional.

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