



# EPILEPSY

Epilepsy is a disorder of brain function that takes the form of recurring seizures. Typically, epilepsy is diagnosed in children under 5 however epilepsy can occur at any stage across the lifespan.

Seizures associated with epilepsy often occur when sudden, uncontrolled bursts of electrical activity disrupt regular brain activity patterns. The seizures however can affect individuals in a variety of ways and is dependent on where the seizure is occurring within the brain. Seizures often affect movement, thoughts, sensations, behavior and level of consciousness.

**Before exercising always check with an accredited exercise physiologist.**

## Why it's important to exercise

In many cases of epilepsy seizures occur suddenly and often without warning. The key message for children with epilepsy is to ensure they are participating in physical activity, exercise or sport in a safe environment. When exercising, children with epilepsy should remain hydrated and avoid overexertion and low blood sugar (hypoglycaemia).

Exercise in relation to epilepsy has in some cases shown to reduce abnormal EEG readings, reduce seizure frequency, and reduce the number of other co-morbidities or health complaints such as muscle pains, sleep problems, depression and fatigue.

Exercise has also shown to improve self-esteem and social integration, elements of an individual's well-being which can often be affected with epilepsy.

## Things to remember:

- Before engaging in an exercise program consult your child's treating specialist, GP and accredited exercise physiologist
- Avoid your child's known seizure triggers
- Ensure appropriate medications are taken
- Ensure your child stays well hydrated and has a drink or snack to avoid hypoglycaemia
- If your child feels faint, lightheaded, nauseous or dehydrated, avoid exercise
- Ensure your child wears their medical alert bracelet
- If involved with water sports, ensure your child wears a life jacket

## Types of exercise recommended:

- When your child works with an Accredited Exercise Physiologist they will ensure a variety of safe and different exercise techniques to assist your child in engaging in regular physical exercise to enhance their physical fitness, self-esteem and social integration.

## References:

1. Epilepsy Foundation, Epilepsy and exercise, 2013, [www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/epilepsy-and-exercise](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/conditionsandtreatments/epilepsy-and-exercise)
2. Epilepsy Queensland Inc, Children & Epilepsy, 2016, [www.epilepsyqueensland.com.au/children-epilepsy-0](http://www.epilepsyqueensland.com.au/children-epilepsy-0)
3. Capovilla, G., Kaufman, K. R., Perucca, E., Moshé, S. L., & Arida, R. M. (2016). Epilepsy, seizures, physical exercise, and sports: A report from the ILAE Task Force on Sports and Epilepsy. *Epilepsia*, 57(1), 6-12.
4. Wong, J., & Wirrell, E. (2006). Physical activity in children/teens with epilepsy compared with that in their siblings without epilepsy. *Epilepsia*, 47(3), 631-639.