

Here Comes The Summer – You and your Holidays

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As we approach the summer months our thoughts turn to the holiday season. For people with epilepsy and their families, there may be additional issues to consider when planning ahead. So whether you plan to holiday at home or abroad this summer, we have some tips for making your holiday as problem free as possible.

Please Note: It is advisable to discuss travel plans with your doctor, especially if you are travelling to areas requiring inoculations or where malaria occurs. Your doctor may also be able to help in deciding which activities may be suitable for you.

Checklist

Before you go, check you have the following:

- European Health Insurance Card for EU countries.
- Travel Insurance – required in EU due to variable cover under EHIC.
- Adequate supply of your daily medication in its original packaging, kept in hand luggage.
- Emergency medication (if prescribed).
- Airline guidelines on carrying liquid medications.
- Letter from your doctor confirming medication is for your epilepsy.



- Copies of prescriptions (Pharmacists abroad cannot dispense on these but a local doctor can prescribe your medication if it is lost or damaged).
- Copy of “Epilepsy Passport” (travel advice document available from Brainwave).
- Contact details of epilepsy organisations or medical services if you plan an extended stay
- Updated Epi-Alert bracelet (within Republic of Ireland).
- Other forms of Epilepsy ID (e.g. jewellery, ID card with local translation)
- Ventilated pillow for sleep seizures (or alternatively use no pillow).
- Two watches to keep track of time difference: one set on Irish time and one set at local time.
- Medication reminders: alerts can be

programmed into mobile phones and some watches.

- Letter of seizure freedom (for car hire) - driving laws vary widely so check these before you go.
- Flotation devices and a bright coloured swim cap.
- Up to date vaccinations – discuss what is appropriate for you with doctor in advance.



Your journey

Travelling and all the preparation for it can be tiring in itself so try to make sure you are well rested before the journey. On arrival, take some time to rest before unpacking and exploring the area.

Your accommodation

- When booking accommodation, ground level is safer especially for those with frequent seizures. If seizures involve wandering, ask to see a plan or layout of the accommodation. Apartments and hotels often have balconies and easily accessible pools. Knowing the layout in advance helps reduce risk.
- If you won't be driving on holiday, choose accommodation served by public transport.
- Remember the same safety advice that applies at home applies on holiday too with regard to cooking, bathing, sleeping and being out and about.
- To try to ensure restful night's sleep, you may wish to choose a less lively location.

While on holiday

- Take your medication at the usual required intervals.
- Keep your patterns of sleep and meals similar to that at home.
- Be mindful of extremes of heat and cold and the effects these can have.
- Keep alcohol intake low to moderate – 1-2 units.
- Choose activities that will not put you at unnecessary risk.
- If you are photosensitive, you may need to take care around discos and other visual triggers. Wraparound sunglasses, polarised

lenses and covering one eye with your hand are often helpful.

- Pace yourself
- Relaxation is an important part of any holiday – make sure to factor it in!

And Finally...

Keep perspective! Safety measures are recommended to enhance your enjoyment while offering you the protection you may need. Keeping this balance will help you make the most of your holiday and keep your concerns to a minimum. Have a great trip!

Managing convulsive seizures on buses and planes

- Passengers in surrounding seats should be moved where possible to leave space around the person having a seizure.
- Raise the arms of seats to allow the person lie across seats on one side (preferably left) in the recovery position to facilitate breathing.
- Protect the head with pillows, blankets or rolled up coats.
- Place nothing in the mouth.
- If the person has vomited during or after the seizure, they should remain on their side and not be lifted up or moved onto their back.
- Monitor the length of time the seizure lasts. Some people may carry emergency medication to stop the seizure and those accompanying them need to know how to use it.
- Lone travellers may need to inform airline staff in advance if they might need emergency medication administered.
- When a seizure lasts more than 5 minutes this may present a medical emergency and the cabin crew or bus driver needs to be informed accordingly. Likewise, if a person is injured, pregnant or has another complicating medical condition they may require prompt medical assessment.