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You, your G.P. and Epilepsy

Your G.P. is generally the first professional you come into contact with for all your medical needs and will normally be the person who refers you on to a specialist service for further investigations and a diagnosis. Often when a diagnosis is made it can take some time to sink in. The person may be unsure of what they need to know or ask and questions may keep popping up after the consultation with the specialist is over.

This is where your link with your G.P. is important. When a diagnosis is established your G.P. can be a valuable source of information and support. This leaflet is designed to help you get the most from your visits to your G.P. by suggesting some topics which can be discussion points. Often in the busy setting of the G.P. clinic time is precious but there is the advantage that G.P. appointments are more readily available than appointments with consultants.

If you have concerns or queries about your epilepsy or treatment it is advisable to book some time to discuss these matters with your G.P. before your next consultant appointment. Bear in mind the G.P. or indeed the consultant may not have all the answers to every question that you may have but they can understand your concerns and are well placed to discuss them with you.

Getting diagnosis of epilepsy can lead to a range of emotional reactions from shock, upset, disappointment, anger denial or even relief. You may have fears and concerns about the impact of the diagnosis on your life and that of your family.

It can be hard to know where to start when you have so many questions or if you don't what you should or shouldn't be concerned about. All concerns and questions are valid - there is no such thing as a silly question – unless of course we never ask it.

GENERAL

- Why do I have epilepsy?
- What caused my epilepsy?
- What is my epilepsy called?
- What is epilepsy?
- What is a seizure?
- Who develops epilepsy?
- Will I always have epilepsy?
- Will I always have seizures?
- Can others in my family develop epilepsy?
- Are there different types of epilepsy?

Is it harmful?
Will I get a warning before a seizure?
What if I vomit?
What about epilepsy in later years?
Will my child grow out of epilepsy?
How long should seizures typically last?
How would I know if I had a seizure in my sleep?

LIFE STYLE ISSUES

How will it affect my lifestyle?
What about sport and leisure?
Can I use a computer and T.V. safely?
What can I do to prevent seizures?
My tests were clear - How can I still have epilepsy?
Will I be able to lead a normal life?
What if I need to travel abroad?
What about alcohol?
Does stress play a part?
What about sleep?

TREATMENT

Do I have to pay for medication?
How is epilepsy treated?
How effective is treatment?
How often do I need to take medication?
What if I miss a dose?
I'm concerned about side effects
Are alternative therapies used in epilepsy?
What about medications interactions?
What about rectal diazepam – when is it used?
If my seizures continue what are the options?
What is Vagus Nerve Stimulation?
Might I be a suitable candidate for surgery?
What new treatments are available?
Should my blood levels for medication be Checked?

WOMENS' ISSUES

Will I be able to have a baby?
Can I use contraception?
Is there a connection with monthly periods?
Will the medication affect my unborn baby?
Should I take folic acid in case of pregnancy?
How will my labor be managed?
What about care of the newborn for mums with epilepsy?
What about epilepsy in the menopause?

DIAGNOSIS

How can doctors be sure it's epilepsy?
What is an EEG test?
What is a CT scan?
What is and MRI and do I need one?

SAFETY

What about safety at home?
What should someone do if I have a seizure?
I live alone – how can I improve my safety?
When does an ambulance need to be called?

OTHER

Where can I get support and information?
Who should I tell – who needs to know?
How will I manage out and about?
Is there an effect on sexuality?
When can I resume driving?
How can I explain epilepsy to my child?
Will it affect my employment?
What about schooling?

NOTE

Brainwave has produced information leaflets (also available on www.epilepsy.ie) which answer many of these questions.