

RISK – a balanced approach

Everyone, not just those with epilepsy face risks in the community, this includes the school environment.

Not all seizures constitute an emergency or require an ambulance to be called. Every student's epilepsy is unique, and no assumptions should be made about the risks that may or may not be relevant to the student prior to consulting the parent/guardian.

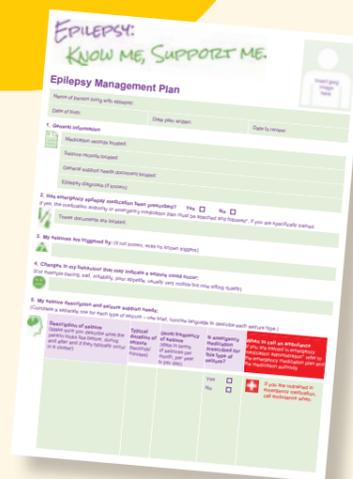


A useful way to have a risk conversation in a school is:

1. Have an **Epilepsy Management Plan (EMP)** (and when indicated, an Emergency Medication Management Plan) endorsed by the doctor which clearly outlines any risks and accompanying strategies. In some instances, it may be necessary to review the EMP because a new activity (for example swimming) was not considered at the original time of endorsement.
2. **Think about risk in terms of a balance** as illustrated in the diagram above. The school cannot reduce all risk to zero. However, working with the family around safety and inclusion is imperative. The student's individual epilepsy, what's important to them and strategies that their doctor has recommended should be the basis of this discussion.

This approach is consistent with student-centred practice.

What's important **to** the student and their parent/guardian should be discussed – this is the basis of consultation. When a conversation wholly focuses on what is perceived to be important **for** the student (for example their perceived safety; perceived impact on other students; perceived impact on staff) then the conversation could become unbalanced.



3. When having a **risk conversation**, the following questions should be included:
 - What sort of seizures does the student have?
 - Do they lose consciousness during the seizure?
 - Do they get a warning before a seizure?
 - How well controlled are the seizures (frequency)?
 - Are there any known seizure triggers?
 - How do the student and parent/guardian feel about the proposed activity?
 - What are the particulars around the activity (supervision, where it's held, access to medical support etc.)?

Risk assessments include thinking about what harm a seizure may do to the student, their classmates or staff in the event of a seizure. Given that the inherent nature of seizures is that they are unpredictable, risk assessments will be different for various activities (e.g. swimming; camps; school practical classes).

Assessing a risk involves weighing up:

- How likely is it a seizure may occur (triggers, current seizure frequency, specifics around the activity undertaken).
- What are the possible outcomes if a seizure were to occur (no injury, minor or serious injury).
- What least restrictive strategies may reduce the risk, based on the likelihood of a seizure and its possible outcome if a seizure was to occur.



This resource 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.

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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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The Epilepsy Smart Schools Practical Guide and supporting resources provides information on how a school can embed inclusive, safe and educationally sound practices for students with epilepsy and in so doing become 'epilepsy smart'. The guide and supporting resources which can be accessed via www.epilepsysmartschools.org.au