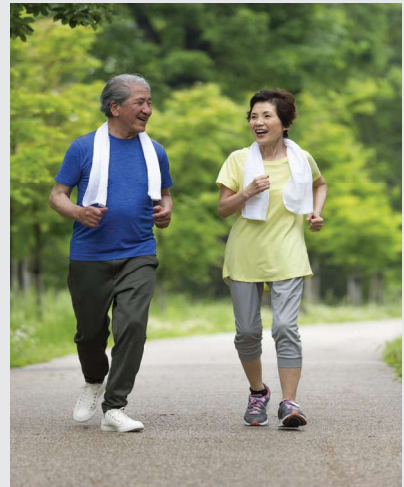


# WELLNESS & EPILEPSY

## *What is wellness?*

Wellness refers to a healthy balance of mind, body, and feelings. Wellness is also an approach that focuses on a person's health and how to prevent and manage medical problems. The emphasis is on health and well-being, rather than a specific disease. The term wellness may be used to describe a person's overall health, happiness, and comfort. Reaching a state of wellness is:

- ▶ Ideally self-directed and community supported
- ▶ A conscious and active process
- ▶ Making choices that lead toward a healthy and fulfilling life



## *Why is wellness important for people with epilepsy, their families, and caregivers?*

We all need to take care of ourselves—to manage individual health problems and get or stay healthy and happy, despite health problems. A health condition like epilepsy is important to wellness, but is not the only factor. It's important to consider the way epilepsy and treatment affects your health, well-being, and daily life.

## *What is self-management?*

Self-management is the term used to describe the steps people take to manage their health and wellness. For people with epilepsy, there are two key areas:

***Epilepsy-Specific Self-Management:*** This area includes what people do to manage seizures, medicines, other treatments, safety, or anything specific to managing epilepsy. Examples of these include managing:

- ▶ Seizures (knowing seizure types, seizure first aid, recognizing triggers, keeping a seizure diary)
- ▶ Treatments (taking medications properly; affording medicines; and making decisions about diagnostic tests, surgery, or devices)
- ▶ Safety (assessing risks, using seizure precautions, preventing seizure emergencies, making seizure response and safety plans, talking about sudden unexpected death from epilepsy [SUDEP] and ways to lessen risks)
- ▶ Comorbid conditions (recognizing and managing other health problems that may happen with epilepsy, such as sleep problems, injuries, problems with mood, thinking, or behavior)

***Managing Life with Epilepsy:*** The second major part of self-management is what medical professionals call “chronic care management.” In essence, this includes steps for healthy living and managing life with epilepsy. Some of these issues may be similar to what people do for other chronic health problems. This area may include:

- ▶ Keeping a healthy lifestyle

# WELLNESS & EPILEPSY

- ▶ Identifying and treating other health problems early
- ▶ Having an active partnership with your health care team
- ▶ Coping with how epilepsy affects your daily life and independence

The Managing Epilepsy Well Network ([managingepilepsywell.org](http://managingepilepsywell.org)) provides a number of self-management programs, such as UPLIFT, PACES, and HOBSCOTCH, to help people with epilepsy.

If you live with epilepsy, seizure control can be enhanced by looking after your overall health and your epilepsy. And for people who care for someone with epilepsy, taking care of your own health is very important. Sick, stressed, or sleep-deprived families or caregivers are unable to provide quality care.

Paying attention to your health and wellness is critical to how all our brains function. Focusing on your overall wellness using a holistic approach looks at your whole body and how you interact with your environment. This approach to health can have benefits:

- ▶ Lower health care costs
- ▶ Healthier body & brain
- ▶ Less stress
- ▶ Improved emotional health
- ▶ Better frame of mind to tackle day-to-day activities

## *What are the dimensions of wellness?*

Wellness includes many different areas of your life that may be affected by epilepsy or other health concerns. The Wellness Wheel highlights key areas to look at.

How each area is affected may vary depending on your age, support, health, and other unique issues. Pay attention to each dimension and how it may relate to the other dimensions. Improving one dimension can also improve the others. And, neglecting one dimension can make the others suffer.

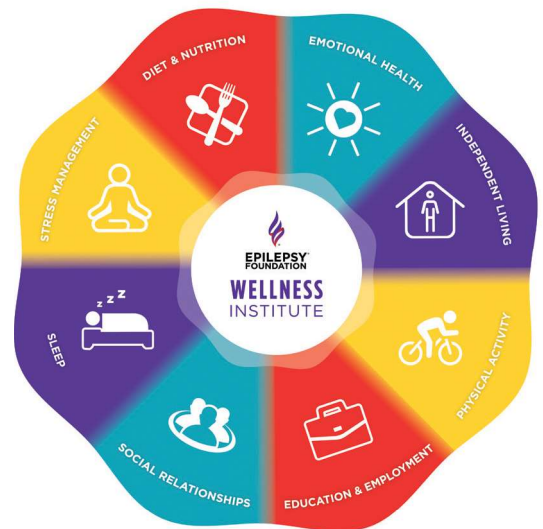
## *How can I start to improve my wellness?*

Understand yourself—mind, body, emotional health, finances, and social situation. Finding out what bothers you most or is most important may be a good place to start. Assess your health and your lifestyle. Review this with your health care team. Then pick one or two areas to focus on. Don't try to change everything at once—start small and then build on your successes.

## *Ways to begin and make changes for the better.*

### **Self-Belief**

This is the most important part of changing your behavior(s) and motivating yourself. Truly believe in your change. Believe in WHY you're trying to change. And believe you can do it. Having a positive mindset will make it easier to follow through when you're faced with temptation or stress.



# WELLNESS & EPILEPSY

## Self-Discipline and Patience

It takes hard work, consistency, and dedication to make lasting change. People looking for a quick fix are setting themselves up for disappointment. It takes consistent practice and time to build self-discipline. Just like building muscles, you need to work at it. Be patient and trust the process.

## Be Honest with Yourself

Give yourself some tough love. Be honest with yourself and aware of the choices you're making. If you have trouble making changes, ask why. Are you sabotaging yourself or did you just have a minor slip up? Either way, identify the problem and take that next step forward.

## Focus on the Positive

Turn off the negative voices. Being optimistic makes it easier to move forward and stick with changes when life gets stressful.

## Set S.M.A.R.T. Goals

To ensure clear, reachable goals, follow the SMART guidelines.

**Specific:** Simply written and clearly defined

**Measurable:** Be able to measure when you have met the goal

**Achievable:** Goals to stretch you, but realistic to achieve

**Relevant:** Reasonable, realistic, and results-based

**Time-bound:** Set a time frame with a practical sense of urgency

## Start Small at First

We are motivated by success. Once you've set your priorities and goals, make smaller, actionable plans to achieve those goals. Check in with yourself regularly (daily, weekly, monthly) to make sure you are still on track. Tracking your progress helps you see moments of success as you make changes.

## Share with Your Friends

Share your goals with those you care about—support can help you stick with it. Share your progress—ask them to check in with you, or maybe join you in this new habit.

## Celebrate!

Make sure to celebrate your successes throughout your journey. Make your celebration complement your goals. For example, after eating healthy for one week, treat yourself to a movie with friends rather than a bowl of ice cream.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- ▶Epilepsy Foundation Wellness Institute: [epilepsy.com/wellness](http://epilepsy.com/wellness)
- ▶My Seizure Diary: [diary.epilepsy.com](http://diary.epilepsy.com)
- ▶Epilepsy & Seizures 24/7 Helpline: 1-800-332-1000, en Español 1-866-748-8008, [epilepsy.com/helpline](http://epilepsy.com/helpline)
- ▶Find Your Local Epilepsy Foundation: [epilepsy.com/local](http://epilepsy.com/local)

Disclaimer: This publication is designed to provide general information about epilepsy and seizures to the public. It is not intended as medical advice. People with epilepsy should not make changes to treatment or activities based on this information without first consulting with their health care provider.