

EPILEPSY TOOLKIT

Difficult to Treat Seizures

The treatment of seizures and epilepsy varies from person to person. For every individual with epilepsy, treatment goals include both preventing seizures and minimizing side effects. Anti-seizure medicines are generally the first-line of treatment in epilepsy, and work well for about two out of three people. However, for a third of people, seizures are considered “difficult to treat” and may require additional options.

The [Epilepsy Foundation](#) wants you to know that you have our support. *You do not have to manage your epilepsy alone.* We are here to answer questions and help you in learning about advanced diagnostic and treatment options. This toolkit was designed with you in mind. It can help you navigate the challenges and decrease the risks of difficult to treat seizures and connect you to resources that allow you to find the best treatment possible.



Section 1: Drug-Resistant Epilepsy

A person with drug-resistant epilepsy has seizures that do not successfully respond to treatment with anti-seizure medicines. You may also hear this referred to as “medication-resistant”, “intractable”, “pharmaco-resistant”, or “medically refractory” epilepsy.

When a person continues to have seizures after trying two different anti-seizure medicines, they should be evaluated by a specialist for drug-resistant epilepsy.

In this section, you will learn how drug-resistant epilepsy is diagnosed. Read more about reasons uncontrolled seizures occur, how to lower your risk, what a rescue therapy is, and about Seizure First Aid.

Get started here:

[Do I have drug-resistant epilepsy and possible causes](#)

[Approaches to drug resistant epilepsy](#)

[Anti-seizure medications](#)

[Seizure rescue medications](#)

[First aid for seizures](#)

Section 2: Getting Help for Difficult to Treat Seizures

It is important to understand that there are different levels of medical care for epilepsy. Seeking care from a primary care physician or neurologist in the community may be adequate for someone with well-controlled seizures. However, when seizures persist and are difficult to control it is critical to connect with an epilepsy care team. This section will help you understand the role of an epileptologist and a comprehensive epilepsy center. Learn about the tests and evaluations that help diagnose drug-resistant epilepsy. You'll learn about managing uncontrolled seizures at home and when to seek urgent care at the hospital.

Connecting to an
epilepsy center

Advanced diagnostic
testing

Managing
uncontrolled
seizures at home

Seizure emergencies

Section 3: Surgery for Epilepsy

Considering epilepsy surgery can feel overwhelming. However, surgery has the potential to decrease seizures and risks associated with them. For some people, epilepsy surgery may lead to seizure freedom, which can improve their quality of life. There are many different types of epilepsy surgery. The evaluation process leading up to surgery helps to carefully determine if surgery is appropriate and may be able to help. This section will help you learn more about the different risks and benefits of epilepsy surgery, and important things to consider before and after.

[Who can epilepsy surgery help?](#)

[Risks and benefits of surgery](#)

[Types of epilepsy surgery](#)

[Pediatric epilepsy surgery](#)

[Evaluation for surgery](#)

[Preparing for surgery](#)

[Recovering from surgery](#)

Section 4: Neuromodulation and Devices

Advances in science and technology are continually providing new options for the treatment of epilepsy. A diagnosis of drug-resistant epilepsy does not mean a person will never be able to control their seizures. Careful and expert evaluation at an epilepsy center may be the first step to providing you with options for controlling your seizures, including neuromodulation, where a device sends small electric currents to the nervous system. In this section, you'll learn more about these technologies and approaches.

What is
neuromodulation?

Vagus nerve
stimulation
(VNS)

Responsive
neurostimulation
(RNS)

Deep brain stimulation
(DBS)

Section 5: Other Treatment Options

This section will help to inform you on alternative treatment options and research. The Epilepsy Foundation 24/7 Helpline (1-800-332-1000; en Español: 1-866-748-8008) can connect you to epilepsy centers offering the most up-to-date diagnostic tools and therapies.

[Dietary therapy
for epilepsy](#)

[Medical cannabis](#)

[Clinical trials](#)