

EPILEPSY AND ALCOHOL

Drinking alcohol in moderation can be an enjoyable experience. A pint of beer can satisfy a genuine thirst, while a glass of wine can be a welcome relaxant after a hard day's work. Going to the pub means contact with friends, and social life is important for everyone.

However, anyone who drinks alcohol must have a responsible attitude to it if they are to avoid the often serious health and social problems which can result from alcohol misuse. The person with epilepsy may require to take more care than others if drinking alcohol. There are good reasons for this.

1. Alcohol can interfere with anti-epileptic drugs and can prevent them from reaching levels in the bloodstream necessary to control seizures.
2. Large amounts of any liquid, including beer, cider etc.. can trigger seizures in a person with epilepsy.
3. Heavy drinking is often associated with late nights, missed meals and forgotten tablets, all likely to increase the risk of a seizure.

Medical opinion about whether a person with epilepsy should drink alcohol varies. Some doctors recommend that it should be avoided at all times, while others say a moderate amount in most cases will do no harm. This is an individual decision to be taken in the light of professional advice and the individual's wishes.

It is important to bear in mind that a person taking drugs which act on the brain is likely to be more sensitive to the effects of alcohol than other people. This means that rather less than the recommended amounts for activities such as driving might affect their competence. It is possibly best for the person with epilepsy not to drink any alcohol before driving. At other times consumption of alcohol should be carefully monitored.

