
Epilepsy and employment

Summary

- Many people living with epilepsy are successfully employed across a range of professional fields.
 - There are services available for people with epilepsy who are seeking employment.
 - There are disability career development professionals who can assist you with employment planning, volunteering, work experience and job applications.
 - You do not have to tell your employer or co-workers about your epilepsy diagnosis, unless it affects your ability to do your job.
 - You may choose to disclose your epilepsy depending on the type of work you are doing, the type of seizures that you have, and the risks to you, your co-workers and others if you have a seizure while working.
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Epilepsy is a common condition of the brain in which a person experiences recurrent unprovoked seizures.

Many people living with epilepsy are successfully employed across a range of professional fields. Employment types may include apprenticeships, traineeships, open employment or supported employment with an Australian Disability Enterprise.

Apprenticeships and traineeships are a way of combining training and employment and can lead to a nationally recognised qualification. Apprenticeships and traineeships can be undertaken by anyone of working age and are available to school-leavers, as well as those re-entering the workforce or wanting a career change.

Open employment refers to working in the open labour market. Depending on the job requirements, an applicant may need to have a particular qualification (such as secondary school completion) to be eligible for that job.

In some cases, a diagnosis of epilepsy may mean that you are not eligible for certain roles or jobs – particularly if you have uncontrolled seizure activity. (In some contexts the risks to you, your colleagues and the community may be too great should a seizure occur.)

Some areas of employment are unavailable to anyone with epilepsy, even if you have good seizure control. For example, someone with epilepsy cannot work as a pilot or a commercial driver, such as a train or tram driver.

Epilepsy Management Plans

If you are employed or volunteering somewhere, you may choose to use an **Epilepsy Management Plan (EMP)**. An EMP is an individualised document developed by you and your epilepsy support worker, or other medical professional. It describes:

- your seizure types
- how you would like to be supported during a seizure
- emergency procedures.

Using an EMP in your workplace can help others know what to do if you have a seizure, or in case of an emergency.

Employment support for people living with epilepsy

Employment support is available if you need help finding work and staying employed.

While you may not identify as having a disability, a number of Australian Government programs provide specialist support to people living with epilepsy and their employers, including:

- **Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs)**
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- **School Leaver Employment Supports (SLES)**
- **Disability Employment Services (DES)**
- **JobAccess**.

Australian Disability Enterprises

If you have a moderate to severe disability, **Australian Disability Enterprises** can provide you with training and experience so that you can transition into open employment or continue in supported employment, if you choose to.

ADEs can help you engage in a wide variety of work tasks, including:

- packaging
- assembly
- production
- recycling
- screen printing
- horticulture
- hospitality
- cleaning and laundry services.

The **BuyAbility Directory** lists ADEs providing supported employment in Australia.

School Leaver Employment Supports

School Leaver Employment Supports (SLES) are provided by the NDIS (the National Disability Insurance Scheme). They aim to help Year 12 school leavers transition from school to employment.

Disability Employment Services

Disability Employment Services (DES) help people with a disability, injury or health condition to find and keep a job.

JobAccess

JobAccess is a free information and advice service about the employment of people with disability. JobAccess provides information about services, financial assistance and workplace solutions; as well as information about reasonable adjustments, disclosure of disability, disability employment case studies, tools and checklists.

Telling your employer you have epilepsy

You have to tell your employer about your epilepsy if it affects your ability to meet the requirements of your job.

Otherwise, you do not have to tell your employer (or a potential employer) about your epilepsy – it's your choice.

You may decide you need to tell people at work about (disclose) your epilepsy if:

- you require some workplace adjustments made at work to help you do your job
- your co-workers will need to support you if you have a seizure at work
- there is any risk of injury to you or your co-workers if you have a seizure while performing your role
- your epilepsy potentially impacts the health and safety of your workmates or the public.

Sometimes, having a seizure in a workplace setting, or even during a job interview, can lead to positive discussions about your epilepsy diagnosis and needs.

In this video, Simone takes charge of her epilepsy management by letting her colleagues know about different types of seizures and what to do if they occur in the workplace.

In this video, Helen seeks training from the Epilepsy Foundation, which helps her colleagues respond with confidence if she has a seizure in the workplace.

To learn more about epilepsy disclosure, how to go about it, and the discrimination laws that protect you if you do disclose, view the Epilepsy Foundation **Disclosing your epilepsy – to get the job done!** guide.

Where to get help

- **JobAccess** Tel. **1800 464 800**
- **BuyAbility** Tel. **1300 043 517**
- **Disability Discrimination Legal Service** Tel. **(03) 9654 8644**
- **Epilepsy Foundation** Tel. **1300 761 487**

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