

# Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog

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Headaches are a part of everyone's lives at one point or another. If you have epilepsy however, those headaches can be much more problematic. In fact, if you are living with epilepsy, your chances of regularly suffering from headaches are increased.

These headaches can occur before or after a seizure, even acting as a warning sign of a seizure coming on. The stresses of day-to-day life along with the added worry of having headaches and seizures only increase the likelihood of getting headaches.

## **What Kinds of Headaches Are Associated With Epilepsy?**

When it comes to headaches and epilepsy, there are typically four different kinds of headaches that one is most likely to experience. They are:

**Post-ictal headaches:** These are the most common headaches that a person living with epilepsy will experience, affecting an estimated 45% of people with epilepsy. Usually occurring after a seizure, post-ictal headaches traditionally last between 6 – 24 hours and can range in pain and intensity.

**Pre-ictal headaches:** Less common than post-ictal headaches, pre-ictal headaches may be an early indication that a seizure is imminent. These headaches are typically brief, throbbing, and affect roughly 20% of people who experience seizures.

**Migraine headaches:** A more common form of headache, migraines typically involve an intense pain across one's head, nausea, vomiting, and sensitivity to sound and light. Similar to epileptic seizures, migraines can be caused by stress, fatigue, menstruation, and alcohol.

**Ictal headaches:** A rare type of headache, an ictal headache is a direct symptom of a seizure. They can range in intensity and pain and are seen in all kinds of epilepsy.

## **Are There Any Treatment Options For These Headaches?**

In essence, there are two practical ways headaches can be treated.

Wait until the headache starts and treat it with over-the-counter medications like acetaminophen and ibuprofen. While these may work for smaller headaches, migraine headaches may require remedies prescribed by your doctor. Prescription medications called triptans can be effective at stopping a migraine in its tracks, however the type of medication varies depending on your needs and your doctor's preferences.

Take preventative action to avoid headaches all together. With this approach, you take medication that your doctor prescribes daily, which work to stop a headache before it forms. In fact, the epilepsy medication Depakote has been shown to prevent headaches while managing

epilepsy, however, only your doctor can know whether this option is right for you. Also consider lifestyle and dietary changes that may trigger the onset of a headache. Pay attention to your stress levels, get plenty of rest, eat a healthy diet, and avoid alcohol.

While everyone experiences headaches, to those who live with epilepsy, they can be an especially annoying problem. Treatment options can vary depending on the type of epilepsy you have and the severity of your headaches or migraines, so be sure to talk to your doctor about the most effective way to deal with troublesome headaches.

***Editor's Note: The Carpe Diem – Seize the Day Blog will be distributed and posted weekly.***

**Always remember – CARPE DIEM – SEIZE THE DAY!**

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