

## MY LIFE WITH EPILEPSY

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The first time I had a seizure was on the 11th of September 2011 at 9:30 in the morning. My mam and my sister told me they were about to get up to have breakfast when suddenly they heard a loud bang. They expected me to shout out that I was alright. There was silence. So my sister walked in to my room to see if I was alright and to her horror she saw me shaking on the floor. There was a brief panic because neither of them knew what to do. My sister ran down the road to my mam's friend and there she called the emergency services. When I asked, my mam said "the emergency services were amazing" and they told her what to do until they got to our house in Rowlagh, Clondalkin.

My first seizure lasted about five minutes. Then the paramedics put me on a stretcher to bring me to Tallaght Hospital. On the way to the hospital I had another seizure and when I got to the hospital I had three more.

I don't remember clearly the moment the doctors told me I had epilepsy. There was no shock or tears, it's all really like a blur at this stage. I was kept in hospital for about two weeks and the doctors and nurses were really helpful. After I had a CT scan they told me I had scarring on the brain. This means I was likely having silent seizures, which meant I probably hadn't had a full night's sleep in a long time. The medication I was put on helped stimulate my brain and helped me sleep.

Epilepsy is a neurological disorder. A neurological disorder is any disorder of the nervous system, bio chemical and electrical abnormalities in the brain. Epilepsy can be triggered if you're tired or stressed. Epilepsy Ireland estimate there are around 37,000 people in Ireland suffering with the condition.

After this day I was put on a drug called Epilim Chrono. Since that day I believe I have changed a lot (after I was put on this medication). Before, I was very hyperactive and I had so much energy. After I started taking the medication I was very tired, had much less energy and I had no idea why.

My medication is working well now. I only have seizures every so often but I get really dejected when I have the occasional one. This is because I can go a long time without having a seizure and then out of the blue, I have one, it can really lower your spirits.

Between September 2011 and September 2017 I had a few minor seizures. However, on the 3rd of September 2017 I had a major incident, it was the first one I had in two years. I was getting ready in my bathroom and then, all of a sudden, I woke up on the bathroom on the floor with an awful taste in my mouth. The taste was the glucose they used to bring me out of my seizure. I was then brought to Tallaght hospital for a check-up. As a result of this occurrence I now have to take a new medication called Keppra.

Despite understanding epilepsy more now than we ever have, people with the disorder may still be judged. It can affect psychological health and quality of life because sufferers believe they can't do basic things such as driving a car or watching a movie (photosensitive epilepsy). The possibility of having another seizure can hold people back, not necessarily by others, but by themselves.

Epilepsy is passed on genetically. Studies have found that some people who have epilepsy have a gene which causes them to have an abnormal resistance to drugs which explains why some people still have seizures even though they're on medication.

There is no one way to treat epilepsy simply because there are a lot of different types of seizures that can occur. This means that what you will have to do is sit down with a doctor

who specialises in epilepsy and find a medication that will work for you. I was lucky enough to have the first medication I was given work. But that will not be the same for all people. You just have to hope that the medication the doctor gives you will work.

I put trust in my doctors. Every day brings the possibility of a new seizure but I try to look on the bright side of things. Every day my medication works and every day I don't have an episode is a success and this is what lifts my spirits.