

# What is epilepsy?



**Caritas Malta Epilepsy Association**

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## DISCLAIMER

The purpose of this leaflet is to initiate a discussion on how to find help on epilepsy. It is not intended to provide people with instructions on how to manage epilepsy on their own.

The information contained on this leaflet is for information purposes only, and you assume full responsibility and risk for the appropriate use of medical information contained herein. Do not make changes in your treatment, including medication or lifestyle, as a result of any information you read in this leaflet, and be sure to consult with your doctor before changing any medical treatment.

While CMEA takes pride in providing accurate and up-to-date information about epilepsy and its consequences, there may be omissions or inaccuracies in such information and on this leaflet.

CMEA does not guarantee the accuracy or completeness of its information or services, and specifically disclaims any liability therefore. It is always important to consult a doctor.

# Introduction about this leaflet:

There are more than 4000 reasons for this leaflet. That is the approximate number of Maltese who have epilepsy. Indeed, epilepsy is one of the most common neurological conditions affecting more than 50 million people globally.

You may see people with epilepsy every day and not even know it. People with epilepsy look just like everyone else ... except when they have a seizure.

This leaflet has two main purposes. If you are someone who frequently deals with the public, this should help you recognize a seizure and give basic first aid if it is needed. Secondly, the leaflet is designed to provide basic information to equip people with epilepsy to have a better quality of life.

Epilepsy, being a hidden disability, can create challenges. For many people with epilepsy, the stigma related to the condition is more difficult to deal with than seizures.

However, with education and proper adjustments, considerations and understanding, people with epilepsy can lead a normal life. In fact, many famous people had or have epilepsy like Julius Caesar, Alexander the Great, Vincent Van Gogh, Ludwig van Beethoven, Agatha Christie, Danny Glover, Rap Superstar Lil Wayne, Olympic Athlete Dai Greene, former professional football player Jason Snelling, legendary singer Neil Young, Britain's Got Talent singer Susan Boyle and many others.

If you have more questions or want more information, please do not hesitate to contact Caritas Malta Epilepsy Association or refer to our website to attend one of our bi-monthly meetings.

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# Frequently Asked Questions about Epilepsy



## What is epilepsy?

According to the Epilepsy Society

([www.epilepsysociety.org.uk](http://www.epilepsysociety.org.uk)), epilepsy is a neurological condition where there is a tendency to have seizures.

A seizure is caused by a burst of abnormal electrical activity in the brain. This means that having one seizure does not necessarily indicate epilepsy. In fact, many times people will have a single seizure and never have another one again.

## How many people have epilepsy?

Epilepsy is a common neurological disorder affecting 1% of the population. In Malta there are over 4,000 people with epilepsy. Anyone can develop epilepsy, but it often begins in children or in seniors over the age of 65.

## What are the types of seizures?

There are over forty types of seizures depending on the part of the brain affected by the extra discharge of electrical activity and what that area of your brain controls. The most widely recognized seizure is called a generalized tonic-clonic seizure and this affects the entire brain from the start. The person will lose consciousness, fall and their arms and legs will begin to shake. Other types of seizures known as absence seizures may involve staring blankly for a few seconds. In focal seizures the person involved may become confused and behave in an unusual way.

## How is it diagnosed?

Epilepsy is a clinical diagnosis. Descriptions of the event by an eyewitness can be very helpful if the person has lost awareness or consciousness. Investigations such as an EEG (electroencephalogram) may be performed. An EEG tracks and records brain wave patterns. It is a painless procedure and can last anywhere from 20 minutes to a full week. An MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) or a Computerized Topography Scan (CT) might also be recommended by the clinician.

## What causes epilepsy?

There are several conditions that may lead to the development of epilepsy including a genetic tendency, stroke, head injury or infections. In certain cases no cause is found. About 70% of people with epilepsy will be controlled with Anti-Epileptic Drugs (AEDs). Others are candidates for surgery depending on the assessment of neurologists and neurosurgeons.

### What first aid procedures are recommended during a seizure?

If a person is having a focal seizure, stay with them and guide them away from danger whilst reassuring them. In some situations where seizures are prolonged, the doctor may also suggest “rescue medications”. However, this depends on the case and the advice given by the caring physician.

If the person is unresponsive:

- It is important to keep calm.
- Time the seizure.
- Cushion the person’s head.
- Put the person into the recovery position (on their side) after the shaking stops.
- Stay with them until breathing returns to normal.

### What triggers seizures?

Sometimes there are no known causes, but certain situations such as stress, sleep deprivation and alcohol abuse or withdrawal can increase the likelihood of a seizure.

### When is urgent assessment by a doctor recommended?

If the person:

- Is having a seizure for the first time.
- Is injured.
- Is diabetic.
- Is pregnant.
- Has a seizure in water.
- Has a seizure a short while after the first.
- Is not breathing properly.
- Has a seizure that lasts longer than 5 minutes.



If in doubt, seek medical advice.

### Is there anything that one should not do during a seizure?

- Do not hold them down. Let the seizure happen.
- Do not put anything in their mouth.
- Do not move them unless they are in danger.

### Can a person with epilepsy live a normal life?

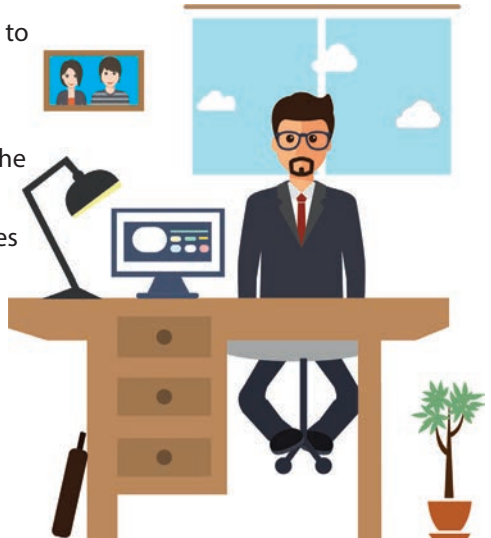
Yes, a person with epilepsy can live a normal life with some small adjustments. Almost 80% of people with epilepsy are able to have long periods in life where their seizures are controlled by medications. Some even go into remission. Unfortunately there are still some whose epilepsy is resistant to anti-epileptic drug treatments. However, this is improving thanks to continuous research and breakthroughs in technology.

# Newly Diagnosed with Epilepsy?

## What should you ask your neurologist?

### Preparing for your appointment: (Adapted from [www.epilepsy.org.uk](http://www.epilepsy.org.uk))

- If possible, take someone who witnessed your seizures and can fully explain what they saw with you.
- Keep a seizure diary - a record of when you have a seizure, what happened, how long it lasted, and the surrounding circumstances.
- You may prepare notes or a set of questions to ask.
- While talking with the neurologist, make sure your questions are answered. If you do not understand, ask the question in a different way.
- It would be a good idea to ask for written instructions regarding medication and first aid.
- Why do you think I have developed epilepsy now?
- What type of epilepsy do I have?
- What is the prognosis for my type of epilepsy?
- What are the side effects of the medication I will be taking?
- Which side effects are important to seek medical attention about?
- When should I take my medication?
- What do I do if I miss a dose or in the case of vomiting or diarrhoea?
- What happens if this medicine does not work?
- Can you explain how driving regulations will affect me?




# Conclusion

A journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. By reading this, you have taken that step that will allow you to help people with epilepsy and their families. After all, education is power and that is what we need to fight the stigma associated with this condition.

The Caritas Malta Epilepsy Association wants to be a source of information and support in this journey so please contact us with any questions or concerns.

We also need your help! If you would like to become an advocate or trainer and help with our free educational campaigns through your personal experience let us know.

The more persons with epilepsy speak out and share their stories, the less the stigma will be. Raising public and professional awareness and dispelling myths about epilepsy is one of our key objectives.



Over the past years our promotional and educational campaigns of the various aspects of epilepsy have included talks on T.V. and radio; lectures at schools and parishes; articles in the local papers; a production of a video/DVD on epilepsy in Maltese and distribution of flyers translated into Maltese. Patient diaries and patient identity cards are also available. Membership is FREE. Bimonthly meetings for members are held on the second Friday of the month. Whatever is discussed during these meetings is kept strictly confidential. To find out when the next meeting is, check our Facebook page or website at [www.caritasmalta.org/epilepsy](http://www.caritasmalta.org/epilepsy).



To support our educational campaigns and conferences financial donations can be made to :

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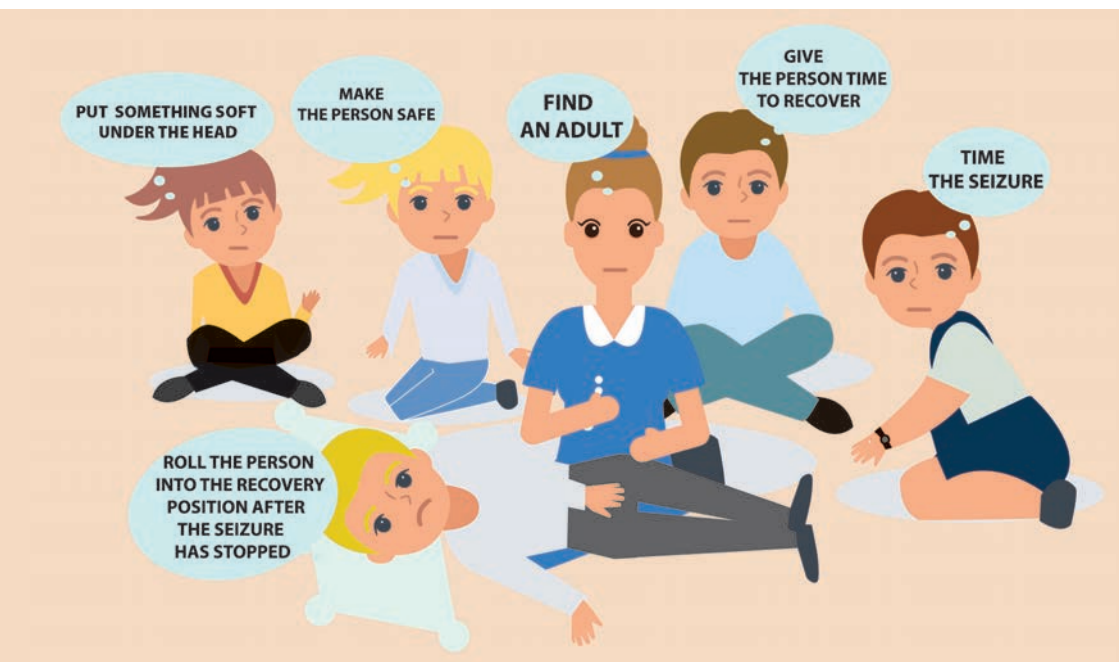
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## What to do when someone is having a seizure:



### Caritas Malta Epilepsy Association

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# X'inhi l-epilessija?



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TAL-KONSUMATUR

Dan il-fuljett kien iffinanzjat mill-Freedom to Live Grant 2022 mogħti mill-Ministeru għall-Inklużjoni, Organizzazzjonijiet Volontarji u Drittijiet tal-Konsumatur



## DIKJARAZZJONI

L-iskop ta' dan il-fuljett hu li tinholq diskussjoni fuq kif wiehed jista' jsib għajjnuna dwar l-epilessija. Mhux intenzjonat li jingħataw istruzzjonijiet ta' x'wiehed għandu jagħmel b'mod mediku biex jieħu ħsieb l-epilessija. L-informazzjoni mogħtija hawnhekk hija mmirata għal skop informattiv u għaldaqstant wiehed għandu jassumi r-responsabbiltà kollha, kif ukoll ir-riskji f'dak li għandu x'jaqsam mal-informazzjoni medika msemmija. M'għandek qatt tagħmel tibdil fit-trattament - sew f'dak li għandu x'jaqsam mal-medicina, kif ukoll fl-istil ta' hajja - bħala riżultat tal-informazzjoni li tkun qrajt f'dan il-fuljett. Qabel ma tiddeciedi li tagħmel xi tibdil, kun ċert li tieħu parir mingħand it-tabib tiegħek.

Filwaqt li CMEA ħadet ħsieb illi tipprovdi informazzjoni b'ċerta reqqa u aġġornata dwar l-epilessija u l-konsegwenzi tagħha, jista' jkun illi seħħew xi tibdiliet jew inezattezzi f'din l-istess informazzjoni kif ukoll f'dan il-fuljett.

CMEA ma tagħtix garanzija fuq il-precizjoni u l-kompletezza tal-informazzjoni jew servizzi msemmija. Għaldaqstant CMEA tiċhad kull responsabbiltà.

Importanti li wiehed dejjem jikkonsulta mat-tabib.

# Introduzzjoni fuq il-fuljett

Hemm aktar minn 4,000 raġuni għal dan il-fuljett. Bejn wieħed u ieħor dan huwa n-numru ta' persuni f' Malta li jgħixu bil-kundizzjoni tal-epilessija. L-epilessija hija l-aktar kundizzjoni newroloġika li taffettwa nies: madwar 50 miljun persuna mad-dinja kollha.

Huwa possibbli li tiltaqa' kuljum ma' persuni li għandhom din il-kundizzjoni, mingħajr ma tintebaħ. Dan għaliex in-nies bl-epilessija huma bħal kulhadd... minbarra meta jkollhom aċċessjoni.

Dan il-fuljett għandu żewġ għanijiet prinċipali:

1. Li jkun ta' għajnuna għal min jaħdem ta' spiss mal-pubbliku u għal min qatt ma ngħata taħriġ ta' għajnuna bażika f'każ ta' aċċessjoni. Dan il-fuljett għandu jgħin biex wieħed jagħraf it-tip ta' aċċessjoni li tkun qed isseħħ u x'għajnuna bażika għandha tingħata, jekk ikun hemm bżonn.
2. Li jipprovdi informazzjoni bażika lill-persuni li għandhom l-epilessija, sabiex itejbu l-kwalità ta' ħajjithom.

Minħabba li l-epilessija hija kundizzjoni li ma tidhirx, il-persuni milquta minnha jistgħu jiltaqgħu ma' diffikultajiet. Għal bosta persuni bl-epilessija, l-istigma relatata ma' dil-kundizzjoni tagħmel il-ħajja aktar iebesha milli l-kundizzjoni nnifisha.

Madankollu, bi ftit aġġustamenti u edukazzjoni persuni li għandhom l-epilessija jistgħu jgħixu ħajja normali. Fil-fatt, hemm numru ta' personalitajiet famużi li kellhom dil-kundizzjoni, fosthom: Ġulju Ċesri, Alessandru l-Kbir, Vincent Van Gogh, Ludwig Van Beethoven, Agatha Christie, Danny Clover, il-kantant tar-Rap Lil Wayne, l-atleta Olimpiku Dai Greene, l-eks plejer tal-futbol Amerikan Jason Snelling, il-kantant legġendarju Neil Young, kif ukoll il-kantanta li ħarġet minn Britain's Got Talent Susan Boyle, fost ħafna oħrajn.

Jekk għandek aktar mistoqsijiet jew tixtieq aktar informazzjoni, tiddejjaqx tikkuntattja lil Caritas Malta Epilepsy Association jew idhul fil-websajt tagħna. Hemmhekk issib ukoll taġrif dwar meta jsiru l-laqgħat tagħna ta' kull xahrej.

**Caritas Malta Epilepsy Association**  
**Sit: [www.caritasmalta.org/epilepsy](http://www.caritasmalta.org/epilepsy)**  
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# Mistoqsijiet frekwenti dwar l-Epilessija



## X'inhi l-epilessija?

Skont il-UK *Epilepsy Society* ([www.epilepsysociety.org.uk](http://www.epilepsysociety.org.uk)), l-epilessija hija kundizzjoni newroloġika, fejn wiehed ikollu tendenza li jesperjenza l-aċċessjonijiet.

Aċċessjoni tigri minħabba attività mhux normali tal-elettriku fil-moħħ. Dan jindika li min ikollu aċċessjoni ta' darba, ma jfissirx li għandu l-epilessija. Fil-fatt u ħafna drabi, persuna jaf ikollha aċċessjoni darba u qatt aktar.

## Kemm hawn persuni bl-epilessija?

L-epilessija hija kundizzjoni newroloġika komuni: taffettwa madwar 1% tal-popolazzjoni. F'Malta hawn madwar 4,000 persuna li għandhom l-epilessija. Kulhadd jista' jkollu dil-kundizzjoni, iżda l-biċċa l-kbira tibda minn età żgħira jew inkella f'persuni ta' l fuq minn 65 sena.

## X'tipi ta' aċċessjonijiet jeżistu?

Hemm 'il fuq minn 40 tip ta' aċċessjoni. Dan jiddependi fuq liema parti tal-moħħ tkun affettwata bl-attività mhux normali tal-elettriku meta sseħħ l-aċċessjoni u l-parti tal-ġisem li hija kkontrollata min dik il-parti tal-moħħ. L-aċċessjoni li jafu biha l-aktar in-nies hija dik li tissejjaħ *generalised tonic-clonic seizure*. Din taffettwa l-moħħ kollu: il-persuna tintilef minn sensiha, taqa' u d-dirgħajn kif ukoll ir-riġlejn jibdedw jicċaqalqu. Hemm tipi oħra ta' aċċessjonijiet li huma parzjali jew fokali, jiġifieri jaffettwaw biss parti żgħira tal-moħħ: dawn iġieġhlu lil persuna li tiċċassa għal ftit sekondi, jew saħansitra tkun konfuża u ġġib ruħha b'mod stramb jew differenti mis-soltu.

## Kif issir id-dijanjosi?

L-epilessija hija dijanjosi klinika. Id-deskrizzjoni tal-aċċessjoni mingħand xi hadd li jkun preżenti waqt l-aċċessjoni nnifisha, hija importanti ħafna speċjalment jekk il-persuna milquta tkun intilfet minn sensiha jew ma tkunx konxja waqt l-aċċessjoni. Fil-klinika jistgħu jsiru eżamijiet bħall-EEG (*electroencephalogram*): dan jirreġistra l-mod ta' kif qed jaħdem il-moħħ, dawk li bl-Ingliż jissejju *brain wave patterns*. Din hija proċedura li ma twegħax u ddum minn xi 20 minuta sa ġimgħa sħiħa. Jista' wkoll jintuza l-MRI (*Magnetic Resonance Imaging*) jew CT SCAN (*Computerised Topography Scan*), skont x'jirrikmanda l-ispeċjalista.

## X'jikkawża l-epilessija?

Jeżistu kundizzjonijiet varji li jistgħu jikkawżaw l-epilessija, fosthom: xi żball fil-ġenetika, attakk ta' puplesija, ferita fir-ras jew xi tip ta' infezzjonijiet tal-moħħ. F'ċerti każijiet ma tinstab l-ebda kawża. Madwar 70% tal-popolazzjoni bl-epilessija hija kkontrollata bl-

AEDs (*Anti-Epileptic Drugs*). Hemm ukoll individwi epilettici li jistgħu jkun eligibbli għall-operazzjoni. Dan però jiddependi minn dak li jiddeciedu n-newrologi u n-newrokirurgi.

### Xi jqanqal aċċessjoni?

Xi drabi l-kawża tal-aċċessjoni ma tkunx magħrufa, imma f'ċerti sitwazzjonijiet bħal meta jkun hemm stress, nuqqas ta' rqaq jew abbuż tal-alkoħol, iżid ir-riskju ta' aċċessjoni.

### F'każ ta' aċċessjoni, liema tip tal-ewwel għajnuna hija rakkomandata?

Jekk persuna jkun qed ikollha aċċessjoni **fokali**, ikun aħjar jekk wieħed jibqa' mal-persuna, u fl-istess ħin, b'attenzjoni, iressaq lill-persuna 'l bogħod mill-periklu, waqt li jkompli jaċċerta ruħu li kollox sew. F'każijiet fejn l-aċċessjonijiet jieħdu fit-tul, hemm tobba li jissuġġerixxu tip ta' 'rescue medicine'. Madankollu dan jiddependi mill-parir li jkun ta t-tabib lill-pazjent, u skont il-każ.

Importanti li waqt l-aċċessjonijiet tiftakar f'dawn il-5 punti:

1. Żomm kalm.
2. Hu l-ħin minn meta tibda l-aċċessjoni sa xħin tieqaf.
3. Poġġi xi haġa ratba taħt ir-ras.
4. Dawwar lill-peruna fuq il-ġenb (recovery position) wara li jieqaf iċ-ċaqliq.
5. Ibqa' mal-persuna sakemm in-nifs jiġi lura għan-normal.

### Meta għandu wieħed jirrikorri għal tabib?

Ċempel 112 jekk persuna:

- terġa' tagħtiha aċċessjoni oħra.
- tindarab.
- hija dijabetika.
- hija tqila.
- tagħtiha aċċessjoni fl-ilma/fil-baħar.
- tagħtiha t-tieni aċċessjoni ffit wara l-ewwel waħda.
- mhux qed tieħu nifs kif suppost.
- jekk l-aċċessjoni tieħu aktar minn 5 minuti.



F'każ ta' dubju rrikorri għal parir mediku.

### X'm'għandekx tagħmel waqt aċċessjoni?

- Halli l-aċċessjoni sseħħ. Qatt m'għandek iżzomm lill-persuna.
- Tpoġġi xejn f'ħalq il-persuna.
- Iċċaqlaqx lill-persuna sakemm mhux qiegħda f'xi periklu.

### Tista' persuna li għandha l-epilessija tgħix haġja normali?

Iva, tista' tgħix haġja normali, b'xi arranġamenti żgħar. Kważi 80% tan-nies li għandhom l-epilessija jirnexxihom għixu perjodi twal mingħajr ma jkollhom aċċessjoni – dan grazzi għall-medicina li tkun qed tittieħed. Uħud ma jkollhom l-ebda aċċessjoni oħra. Sfortunatament għad hemm nies li l-medicina għall-kontroll tal-epilessija ma taħdimx kompletament fuqhom. Madankollu, grazzi għar-riċerka kontinwa u sejbiet ġodda fil-qasam tal-medicina, dawn is-sitwazzjonijiet qed jitjiebu.

# X'għandha tistaqsi lin-newrologu?

***Kif tipprepara ruġiek għall-appuntament mat-tabib:  
(Addattat mis-sit [www.epilepsy.or.uk](http://www.epilepsy.or.uk))***

- Jekk hu possibbli, hu miegħek lil xi ħadd li kien preżenti waqt li kienet qed isseħh l-aċċessjoni - xi ħadd li hu kapaċi jirrakkonta sew dak li jkun ġara.
- Żomm djarju tal-aċċessjonijiet – hu nota ta' meta tkun seħħet, x'ġara, kemm damet u fejn kont.
- Tista' tipprepara xi noti jew mistoqsijiet li tixtieq tiddiskuti mat-tabib.
- Kun ċert in-newrologu iwieġeb għall-mistoqsijiet li għandek. Jekk ma tifhimx, erġa' staqsi l-mistoqsija b'mod differenti.
- Tkun idea tajba jekk titlob lin-newrologu jiktiblek l-istruzzjonijiet rigward il-mediċini u x'tip tal-ewwel għajjnuna tista' tingħata.



## **Xi mistoqsijiet li tajjeb tistaqsi:**

(Addattat mis-sit [www.epilepsy.org.uk](http://www.epilepsy.org.uk))

- Għalfejn taħseb li ħarġitli issa l-epilessija?
- X'tip ta' epilessija għandi?
- X'għandi nistenna mil-lum 'l quddiem mit-tip ta' epilessija li għandi?
- X'effetti jhallu l-mediċini li ha nieħu?
- Hemm xi side-effects li tajjeb li nkellem lit-tabib dwarhom?
- Meta għandi nieħu l-mediċina?
- X'għandi nagħmel f'każ li ninsa nieħu xi mediċina/inkun qed nirremetti u/jew ikolli msarni?
- X'jiġri f'każ li dil-mediċina ma taħdimx?
- Tista' tispedjgali kif se jaffettwawni r-regolamenti tas-sewqan?



# Konkluzjoni

Jekk inti persuna li għandek l-epilessija, jew jekk int ħabib, kollega ta' xi hadd bl-epilessija, GRAZZI talli qed taqra dan il-fuljett biex tinforma ruġek. B'dan il-mod inti tkun qiegħed tgħin lill-persuni li għandhom din il-kundizzjoni, kif ukoll lill-familjari tagħhom. Il-Caritas Malta Epilepsy Association trid tkun sors ta' informazzjoni u sapport f'dan ir-rigward. Għaldaqstant ikkuntattjana jekk thoss li trid tagħmlilna xi mistoqsijiet jew jekk għandek xi diffikultajiet. Anke aħna għandna bżonn l-għajjnuna tiegħek! Jekk tixtieq tgħin fil-kampanji edukattivi li aħna noffru b'xejn, jew tixtieq taqsam l-esperjenzi personali tiegħek, nitolbuk illi tinfurmana. Aktar ma persuni bl-epilessija jtkellmu dwar l-esperjenzi tagħhom, aktar tonqos l-istigma.

Wieħed mill-għanijiet prinċipali tagħna huwa li nkabbru l-għarfien dwar l-epilessija mal-pubbliku ingenerali u nnaqqsu l-ideat żbaljati li hawn fuq din il-kundizzjoni. Tul dawn l-aħħar snin il-kampanja promozzjonali u edukattiva tagħna kienet tinkludi serje ta' interventi fuq it-televiżjoni, ir-radju, sessjonijiet fl-iskejjel u l-parrocċi, artikli fuq il-gazzetti, kif ukoll produzzjoni ta' video/DVD fuq l-epilessija bil-lingwa Maltija.



Barra minn hekk sar u għadu jsir tqassim ta' fuljetti bil-Malti, kif ukoll ħriġna karti tal-identità u djarji għall-persuni bl-epilessija. Tista' tissieħeb fl-assoċjazzjoni tagħna b'XEJN.

Il-laqgħat tal-membri jsiru kull xahrejn fit-tieni Ġimgħa tax-xahar. Dak kollu li jintqal waqt dawn il-laqgħat isir b'mod strettament kunfidenzjali. Biex tkun taf meta se ssir il-laqgħa li jmiss, tista' tara l-paġna ta' Facebook jew is-sit tagħna fuq [www.caritalmalta.org/epilepsy](http://www.caritalmalta.org/epilepsy).

CHECK THIS....



Jekk tixtieq tagħti s-sapport għall-kampanji edukattivi u konferenzi tagħna, tista' tagħmel id-donazzjoni tiegħek b'dan il-mod:

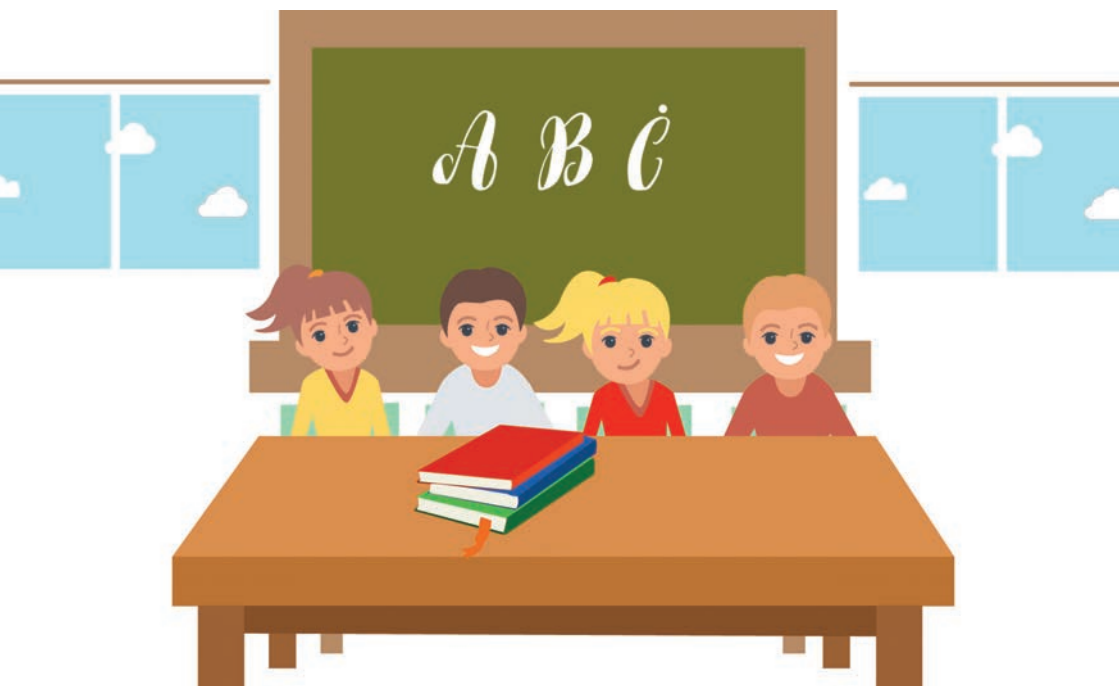
Bank:  
**Bank of Valletta**

Benefiċjarju:  
**Caritas Malta Epilepsy Association**

Numru tal-kont:  
**40012251483**

IBAN:  
**MT44VALL2201300000040012251483**  
SWIFT CODE:  
**VALLMTMT**

X'inhi l-epilessija?



**Caritas Malta Epilepsy Association**

[www.caritalta.org/epilepsy](http://www.caritalta.org/epilepsy)

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