

Which university?

Deciding where to study can be as important for anyone going to university as deciding what to study. Are you going to go to a university close to home or will you move away to a new town or city? Will you live at home, or move into student halls of residence or a shared house or flat?

Going to a university close to home means you can live at home, or travel home at the weekends and holidays, and be near people and places you know. Going to university in a completely new area where you don't know anyone can be daunting and scary, or it can be exciting to start a new life with new places to explore.

Finding out as much as possible about your university and the area before you go might be helpful. You could find out where your halls of residence are, where your lectures will be, where the students union and health centre are, and what student support services they have. Check the university's website and prospectus for more information.

Disclosing your epilepsy

Universities advise that, to get the best support, disclose your epilepsy early, while applying via UCAS.

If you have epilepsy, your university has certain obligations to you under the Equality Act 2010. This means that they have to treat you fairly. It also means that there are sources of support and help available to you if you ask for them. By telling the university that you have epilepsy, you can find out more about what support is available. Also, most universities have a specific disability adviser or coordinator who can help with advice and getting help.

Although you can contact the university disability advisers or service when you arrive, it may help to contact them beforehand or, even better, before you apply, to see what support they can offer.

If you are applying for Disabled Students' Allowance, it is a good idea to apply as far in advance as possible, ideally when Student Finance 'opens', usually the spring before you start university. Check your university website or prospectus.

You could also ask about going to the university for a visit to talk about help and support. This is an opportunity to find out what support they offer, how it is organised and funded. It is also a chance for you to tell them what specific help or support would be most helpful for you. They may ask you to have a 'risk assessment' to see what support might be appropriate.

To find out more visit ucas.com

Practical questions

Before you contact or visit the university, you might want to think about the following, or make a list of questions to ask:

- How might your epilepsy, seizures or medication affect your learning, memory or concentration and what might help with this?
- How will the course will be run and assessed? For example, how much is lecture based and how much is group work or private study? Is the course examined, or is coursework continually assessed?
- Where will your lectures or practicals be held, where is the library and where are these are in relation to where you will live?
- Where will you live and how will this be affected by your epilepsy, seizures, or medication? For example, would living in halls of residence where you have other students around all the time be useful? Or would a seizure alarm or specialist equipment be helpful? These can be difficult to implement in university halls/buildings and it would be best to find out, in advance, if this type of support is available.
- What help and support are you entitled to, and how can you access this?
- Who can support you during your course, or who can you go to if you have any problems during your course? Consider if you will tell other students about your epilepsy, so they would know what to do if you have a seizure.

So, you've decided you're going to university, and selected your course. What next? Planning ahead for the practical things will help to make going to university as straightforward as possible.

Helpline 01494 601400
Confidential, national call rate.
Information and emotional support.
Visit epilepsysociety.org.uk/helpline
for opening hours.

Support and funding

Some universities have funding to provide support for you, or you may be able to get help and support with your application for Disabled Students' Allowances from your university.

Disabled Students' Allowance

Disabled Students' Allowances, or DSAs, are sources of financial support for students with disabilities. They can pay for some costs of attending your course or any help or equipment you might need during your course because of your disability. For example:

- It might help you to pay for a note-taker during your lectures, if you also have a hearing or vision impairment.
- It might help with the costs of travel, if you need transport to get to and from different buildings or placements.

Both full-time and part-time students are eligible for DSAs, although the amount you get will vary and depend on the amount of time your course takes up, and what help you need. DSAs do not depend on your income or your parents' income, and you don't have to pay the money back.

Visit [gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa](https://www.gov.uk/disabled-students-allowance-dsa)

Applying for DSA (Disabled Students' Allowance)

You will need to complete an application form for DSA and you can apply when student finance is available, usually spring prior to starting university. You will need to show 'evidence' that you have a disability. This could be a letter from your GP or specialist, which you may have to pay for.

If you live in England, and are due to start your course in the next academic year, you can apply for DSAs as soon as you've sent in your UCAS application. You can tick the DSA box when you apply for your loan.

Visit [gov.uk/student-finance-register-login](https://www.gov.uk/student-finance-register-login) for England [saas.gov.uk](https://www.saas.gov.uk) for Scotland, [studentfinancewales.co.uk](https://www.studentfinancewales.co.uk) for Wales and [studentfinancenir.co.uk](https://www.studentfinancenir.co.uk) for Northern Ireland.

If you are eligible for DSA you will need to have a needs assessment to see what specific help and support would be suitable for you. This will be done at an approved assessment centre. You can take someone with you if you like. A report will be sent to you and to Student Finance England (or the relevant authority) about what help you need.

Student Finance England (or the relevant authority) will then write to you about how you can arrange for the help you need.

As well as DSA, you may be eligible for other financial support. Contact support services at your university to find out more.

Visit [disabilityrightsuk.org/disabled-students-helpline](https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/disabled-students-helpline) or call their Disabled Students Helpline on 0330 995 0414 (Tuesday and Thursday 11am-1pm). They provide advice to disabled students in England.

Personal Independence Payment

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is a benefit for working age people (16 to 64 years) who have a long-term disability or health condition, and need help or support with daily living, or with mobility, or both. You can claim PIP whether or not you are in work and it is not means-tested (so does not depend on your income or savings). PIP aims to help towards the extra costs that come from having a health condition or disability. If you receive PIP you can spend the money in whatever way you think is best.

Extra money to pay for university

If you need extra financial support (sometimes known as being in 'hardship'), you may be eligible for extra funds through your university or college. Whether you are eligible or not depends on your personal and financial situation.

The fund may be able to help with costs of your course, help to keep studying or help with your everyday living costs. You need to apply directly to your university, through the student services department, after you have started the course. They will tell you exactly how to apply for the fund. Although the fund is not directly related to having a disability, students with disabilities are usually seen as a priority for the fund.

Find out more about these and other benefits at [gov.uk/extra-money-pay-university-university-and-college-hardship-funds](https://www.gov.uk/extra-money-pay-university-university-and-college-hardship-funds)

Travel and transport

A disabled persons railcard might be worth considering. It's a better deal than the 16-25 railcard. It gets you and a friend/family member a third off most rail fares (with the 16-25 railcard you only get a third off your own fare). There are no time restrictions on the disabled persons railcard and so you can use it to get a discount on tickets at any time of the day.

Visit [disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk](https://www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk)

You might also be eligible for a free bus pass. Contact your local council for an application form or visit gov.uk for more information. Some coach operators, such as National Express, also have half-fare schemes for people with disabilities. Contact local coach companies to find out more.

Visit epilepsysociety.org.uk/what-help-available

Hints and tips

There are potentially lots of practical things that you may find helpful.

- Register with a GP and find out where the pharmacy is. Have a supply of your ASM when you arrive.
- If you have an appointment with your epilepsy specialist before going to university, you might want to discuss any concerns you might have and plan for future appointments with them. Plan ahead for your new routine. Would a calendar or diary help to keep track of your studies, deadlines and social life?
- It might be helpful to have something with you that says you have epilepsy, and what someone should do if a seizure happens, for example an ID card or medical jewellery.

Visit livingmadeeasy.org.uk who have details on medical jewellery or contact our helpline for a free ID card.

Think beyond epilepsy

Of course, your university experience is more than just about the degree and your epilepsy. It's also about trying new things and making the most of new social activities. You can sign up for groups, sports and activities during freshers' week.

Think about what you can do (not what you can't) and what you enjoy. What have you always wanted to try? Deciding on what you want to do and thinking about whether some safety measures might help to keep you safe, means you can put epilepsy in perspective and make the most of university life.

Visit epilepsysociety.org.uk/safety-and-risk

Epilepsy Society is grateful to Owen Butler, Disability Adviser, Disability Support Services, University of Nottingham, who reviewed this information.

For a printed copy of this information contact our helpline.

Epilepsy Society
Chesham Lane,
Chalfont St Peter,
Buckinghamshire
SL9 0RJ

Every effort is made to ensure that all information is correct at the time of printing. Please note that information is intended for a UK audience. This information is not a substitute for advice from your own doctors. Epilepsy Society is not responsible for any actions taken as a result of using this information.



**epilepsy
society**