

Should antiepileptic drugs usually be withdrawn after 2 years of seizure freedom?

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There are many reasons why people with epilepsy who are seizure free for at least 2 years wish to withdraw their antiepileptic drugs (AEDs). Patients have an interest in living without medications if possible. AEDs have significant side effects both short term and long term so the goal of many is to be free of AEDs. Women who are just starting out in life and expect to be married and/or have children understand the teratogenicity of many AEDs and wish to stop as well. Accurately predicting the likelihood of seizure recurrence or the likelihood of being seizure free when the AEDs are withdrawn is an important task of the epileptologist when confronted with this question. Thus in this debate we will learn who can quit safely and who not. The decision to withdraw AED should not be taken lightly but only be taken after careful consideration of the risks and benefits, and informed discussion on individual basis. It is the opinion of this epileptologist that withdrawal should be attempted in children when risk factors are favorable. This can improve school achievement, social development, behavior, maturation and sexual development. Withdrawal can be attempted in adults when risk factors are favorable especially when the adult expresses a wish to try. Chances are good when risk factors are favorable but may be devastating when they are not.