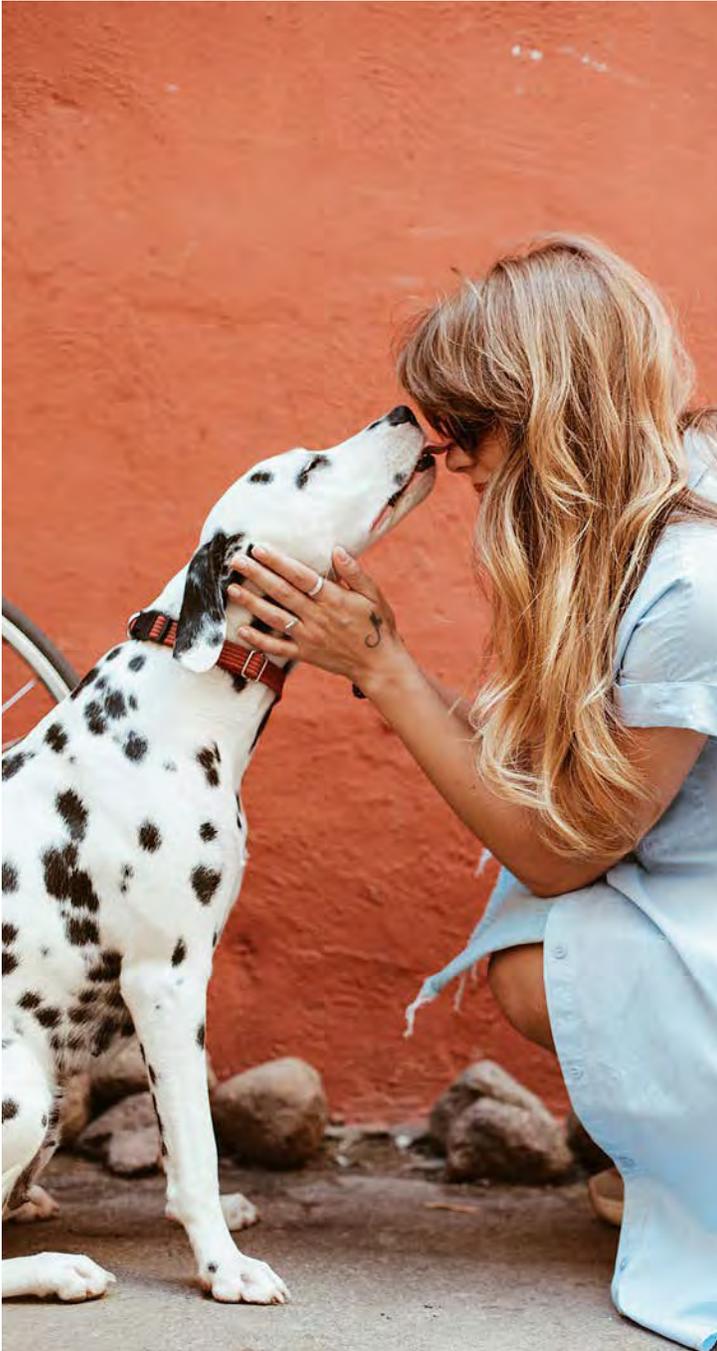


CANINE EPILEPSY

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Helpful information for you and your pet:

1. Leading a Full Life: Living with an Epileptic Pet

[Maintain social interactions](#)

[Be prepared!](#)

2. Epilepsy Treatment Plan: Stick to It

[Treatment plan](#)

[Ways to improve medication adherence](#)

[What to expect](#)

[Knowledge is power](#)

3. Care for the Caregiver

[Take care of yourself](#)

[Build a support network](#)

[Relax & breathe!](#)

Additional Resources

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This project is supported by the **Archie Canine Epilepsy Outreach Fund**

The fund was established by Archie's caregiver, to honor the legacy of this amazing dog whose life was impacted by epilepsy, and support the mission of the Companion Animal Epilepsy Research Laboratory at NC State University in the areas of caregiver education and support, and community outreach. Archie was a patient of NC State Veterinary Hospital; along the way, he participated in clinical trials, assisted with teaching of veterinary students and was a true friend to anyone he met.



1. Leading a Full Life: Living with an Epileptic Pet

A diagnosis of epilepsy in a canine companion does not necessarily mean that you have to change either your life or your goals for your life with your companion. It does however mean that you may need to “pack your bags” to prepare for some challenges that other pet owners may not be facing. Dogs with epilepsy can still be involved in sports such as agility, train for obedience, and more.

Maintaining social interactions is an important facet of overall quality of life for both you and your pet.

Concerns regarding a pet experiencing a seizure while in public, anxiousness about treating a dog’s seizure, worries about a new activity triggering a seizure can frequently impact a pet owner’s social interactions.

Social support networks are important for you as you care for your pet. Resources include family members, online groups devoted to caregivers of pets with epilepsy, as well as caregiver-to-caregiver connections.



**Consider joining a pet specific epilepsy network such as Epil-K9:
www.canine-epilepsy.com**



Be Prepared!

Many caregivers find it helpful to literally pack a bag for both themselves and their epileptic dog when they leave the house.

Ensuring that you have the following items readily available can provide some peace of mind if your dog experiences a seizure during an outing:

- Antiseizure medications - maintenance medications as well as rescue medications, if prescribed
- Emergency contact information for your veterinarian
- Keep ID tags on your pet – tags that include a seizure alert are helpful if your pet becomes separated from you
- Suitable treats or food
- Fresh water supply
- Pet cleaning products - wipes, fecal bags
- Ice pack/cooling packs
- Seizure diary (paper or online) to note any seizure activity
- Copies of pertinent medical records related to seizure management



2. Epilepsy Treatment Plan: Stick to It



The importance of administering antiseizure medications on a regular schedule is key to successful epilepsy management, once the most effective therapies have been identified for your pet. In most cases, your dog will not remind you that it is time to administer medications!

There are many reasons pets may not get medications as prescribed, including:

- 🐾 Caregivers forgetting to medicate, or if multiple family members are in a household, assumption that another person administered the medication to a pet
- 🐾 Work or other daily responsibilities interfering with the ability to administer medication as prescribed
- 🐾 Difficulty in administering medications to a pet
- 🐾 Withholding medication due to concerns regarding current side effects or long term effects of the medication
- 🐾 Freedom from seizures, leading to the assumption that a pet may no longer require the medication

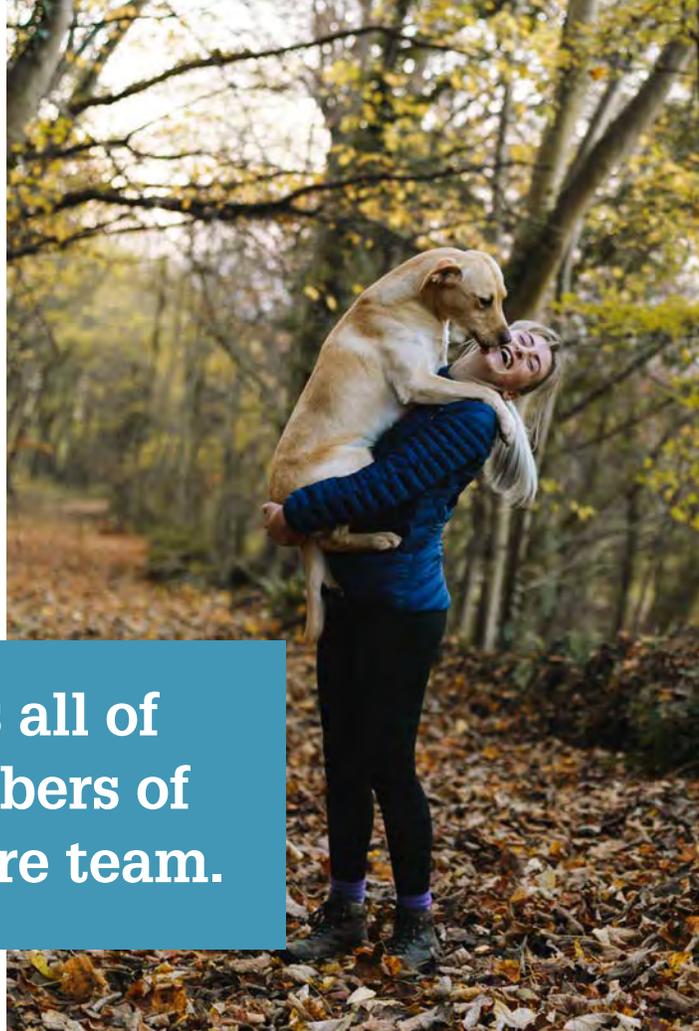
Managing a pet with a chronic condition such as epilepsy is difficult,

and you will encounter challenges along the way. Successful epilepsy management depends on medication adherence, and this relies on a partnership between caregivers and veterinary professionals. Poor medication adherence can lead to more seizures, more lifestyle disruption, more frequent hospitalizations or emergency visits, and a greater financial burden.

It is important to discuss all of your concerns with members of your veterinary healthcare team.

Ways to improve adherence include:

- 🐾 Use medication reminders, diaries, or device apps to keep track of administered medication. This may be particularly useful in family settings where multiple individuals may be involved in the pet's care.
- 🐾 Do not discontinue or adjust any antiseizure medication without first discussing this with your veterinarian. Changes to the diet or the addition of dietary supplements should also be discussed, to ensure there is no interference with your pet's antiseizure medication. Adherence is a team effort, and all members must be informed to be a part of successful epilepsy management.
- 🐾 If your pet does not always swallow medications easily, discuss possible ways to address this with your veterinarian. It is important to monitor your pet to ensure that the medication has not been spit out once administered.
- 🐾 Become your pet's best advocate - if a medication is being changed, understand and discuss potential side effects. Your pet will likely require adjustments of antiseizure medications and their dosages over his or her lifetime.
- 🐾 Keep a seizure diary, and share this with your veterinarian to ensure that everyone caring for your pet has all updated information to help in decision making regarding overall care.



What to Expect from Treatment:

Keys to Understanding and Success

Once a diagnosis of epilepsy has been made, there are many factors to consider when implementing a seizure management plan. Caregivers should **keep in mind the following general points** regarding the management of epilepsy:

Discuss any specific concerns or restrictions that you have about medicating your pet with your veterinarian.

- 🐾 **Epilepsy is a ongoing medical condition**, and as such, treatment is often lifelong. The antiseizure medications prescribed to treat epilepsy often require administration two or three times daily. It is important to ensure that your lifestyle can support this before initiating any therapy.

At the present time, there is no cure for epilepsy, and treatment is focused on seizure control.

- 🐾 **The goal of treatment is control, not cure.** Many dogs do not become seizure free with treatment, and will suffer from breakthrough seizures. It is important for caregivers to keep a diary of all seizures to bring to all veterinary appointments, so that your veterinary team can understand seizure trends and adjust treatment as needed.

It is important to understand the potential side effects associated with a medication.

- 🐾 **All antiseizure medications have side effects.** The most common side effect is lethargy and an incoordinated gait, that tends to be most severe after starting a new medication or adjusting a medication dosage, and then improves as the body adjusts to the medication. It is important to understand the potential side effects associated with a medication, how to monitor and manage side effects at home, and when to seek veterinary attention.

Don't discontinue or adjust medications without consulting your veterinarian.

- 🐾 **Antiseizure medications must always be given as prescribed.** Don't discontinue or adjust medications on your own, as this can potentially result in breakthrough seizures. Discuss any concerns you have about the prescribed medication with your veterinarian; whether it is difficulty administering the medication as prescribed, or a desire to reduce medication for any reason. Ask your veterinarian what to do if a dose of medication is missed.

Determination of a drug's effectiveness is often made over a minimum period of three seizure cycles.

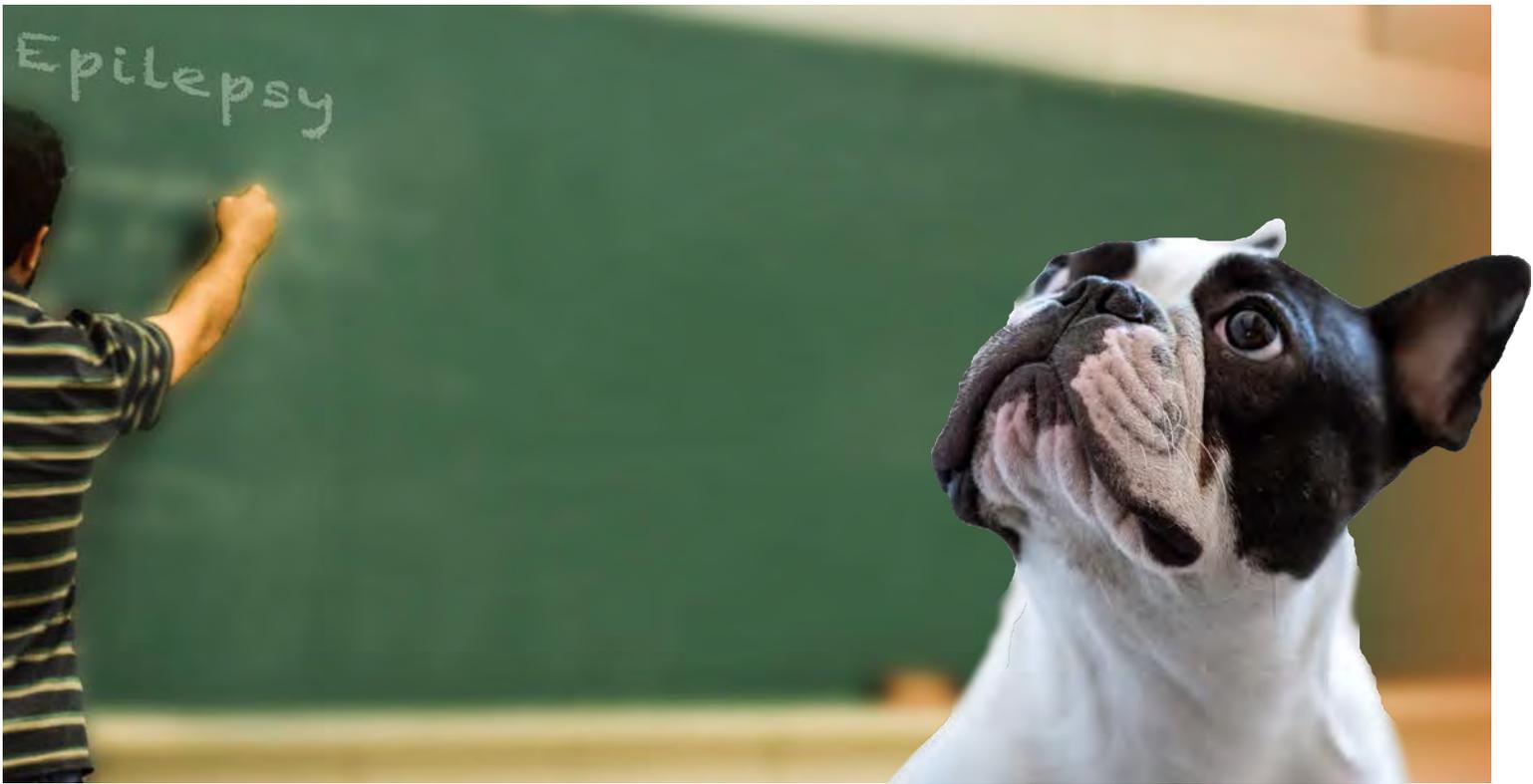
- 🐾 **Don't make an assessment of a drug's effectiveness too soon.** The antiseizure drugs differ with respect to the time required to equilibrate in the body. In addition, epilepsy tends to wax and wane, so determination of a drug's effectiveness is often made over a minimum period of three seizure cycles. During this time, it is important to keep an accurate diary of seizure activity to monitor your pet's response to treatment.

Regular, periodic veterinary visits are necessary for successful seizure management.

- 🐾 **It is important for pet's with epilepsy to have these evaluations,** which often include a physical examination and bloodwork, to both monitor for medication related side effects and assess the response to treatment. Your veterinarian will recommend the frequency of these visits based on specifics of your pet's epilepsy and treatment regimen.

It is important to remember that epilepsy can change over time.

- 🐾 **Seizure management is a long-term commitment.** Successful seizure control requires diligence and commitment from the caregiver. Treatment adjustments are often necessary during the course of treatment. Regular communications with the veterinary team is critical to a successful outcome for your pet, and for you as the caregiver.



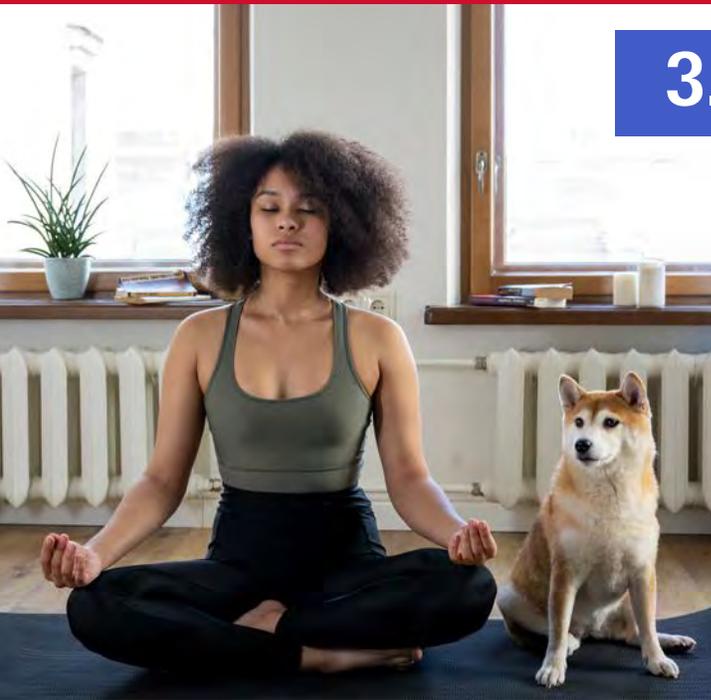
Knowledge is Power

Become as educated as you can about epilepsy in dogs and its management.

Some useful websites with medical information include:

- 🐾 [International Veterinary Epilepsy Task Force](#)
- 🐾 [AKC Canine Health Foundation Epilepsy Initiative](#)
- 🐾 [Epil-K9](#)
- 🐾 [Canine Epilepsy Network](#)

3. Care for the Caregiver



As the primary caregiver for an epileptic pet, you are responsible for providing information to the veterinary health care team, as well as the boarding facility, groomer, petsitter and other family members who may share in the care of your pet. The primary caregiver often carries the largest emotional burden during and after a seizure. Your pet's safety must be balanced with your ability to manage your own day-to-day life and overall well being.

Having an epileptic pet can impact the entire family in broad reaching ways. The best way to support your pet with epilepsy over the long-term is to learn and incorporate strategies to support you and your family as well. The following guidelines are designed to promote overall well-being of your pet, your family and yourself.

- E** **Enjoy your pet** - find ways each and every day to celebrate the bond that you share.
- P** **Plan for seizures**, so that the seizures do not leave you frustrated and confused.
- I** **Invite others into your circle**, such as support groups or friends so that you have others to lean on during challenging times.
- L** **Learn all that you can** about your pet's seizures, so that you can share this information with others who care for your pet.
- E** **Eat nutritious foods** as part of your own self care.
- P** **Prepare for emergencies**, prepare for calm.
- S** **Sleep- seizures often occur overnight** during times of rest, and this often leads to sleep deprivation for the caregiver. Ensure that you obtain adequate rest to allow you to face challenges and help prevent burnout.
- Y** **Yearn for more options**. Become active in epilepsy support networks, or support veterinary epilepsy research and education - this can help you as well as others who are battling this disorder.

Build a network of support

Serving as the caregiver of a pet with chronic medical needs can be challenging. By building a network of support that includes veterinary professionals, personal confidants and advocates, and other pet owners facing similar challenges, you can develop the tools for long-term success.

Websites focused on human epilepsy, such as that maintained by the [International League Against Epilepsy](#), can often provide great ideas and increase understanding of the disorder.

Your dog with epilepsy may not be the next agility champion, but can still be active in canine sports, with modifications. Change in routine, bright flashing lights, or highly stressful activities can serve to trigger seizures in some dogs, so it is best to slowly introduce your dog to any new activity.

Take it slow when introducing your dog to any new activities.



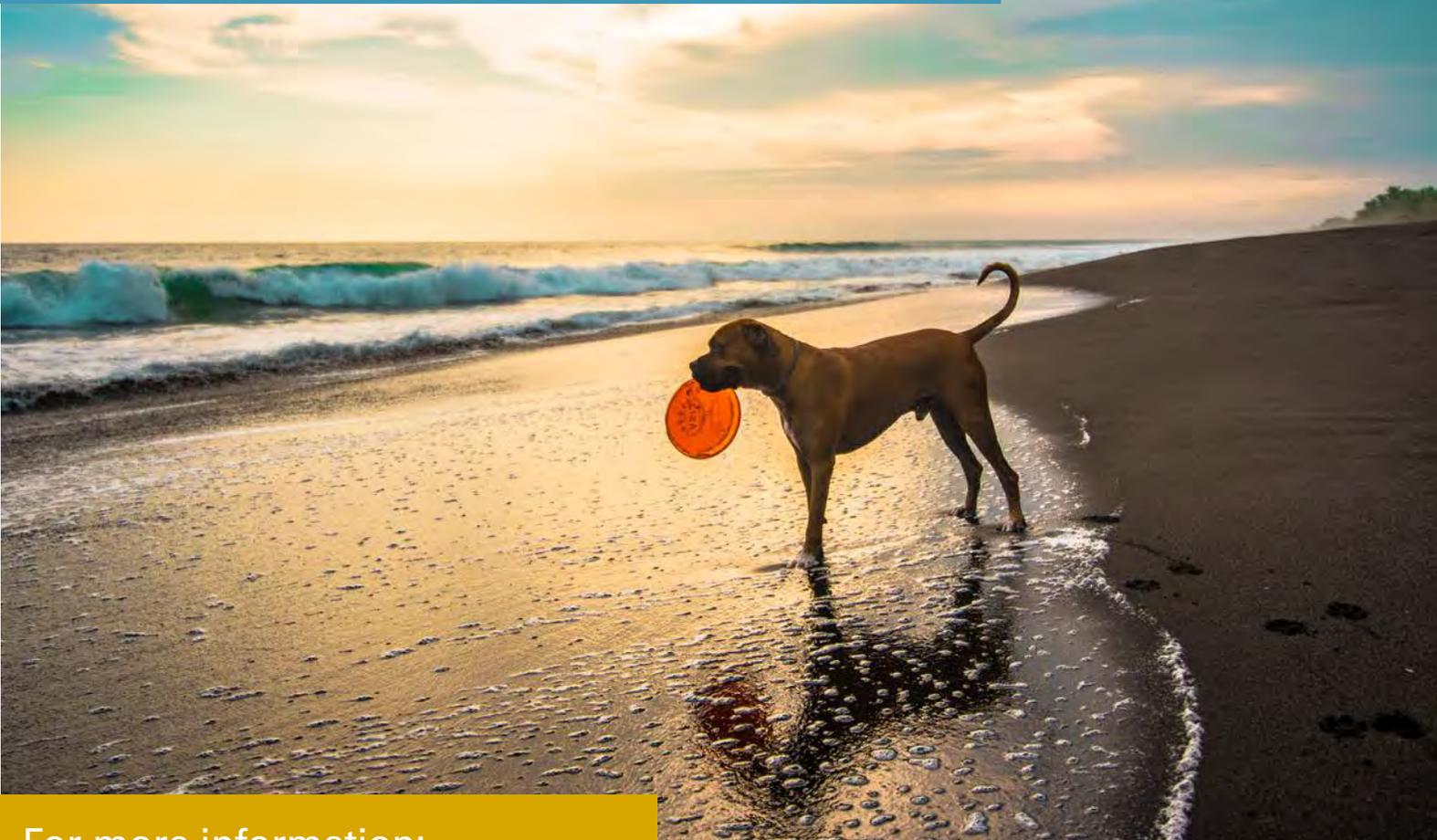
Relax and Breathe

Your dog may still experience seizures, but when you have properly packed for your journey, you will be more prepared to take control of the situation and minimize any negative consequences. This will allow you to enjoy these outings, which will help you and your pet maintain a positive quality of life!



Remember:

Maintaining as normal a lifestyle as possible is important for you and your pet.



For more information:

go.ncsu.edu/epilepsyresearch