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## **CHILDREN WHO ARE SEIZURE-FREE MAY BE ABLE TO STOP TAKING ANTIEPILEPTIC DRUGS**

Children with a history of epilepsy may be able to stop their treatment if they have had no seizures for at least two years, according to *Australian Prescriber*.

In the February issue of *Australian Prescriber*, Dr Robert L Smith, Child Neurologist and Clinical Lecturer in Child Health from John Hunter Hospital, Newcastle, discusses how to withdraw antiepileptic drugs from children.

Around 70% of childhood epilepsies will eventually remit so withdrawal of antiepileptic drugs is often possible. While children are delighted at the prospect, many parents may be more apprehensive. "For some parents, stopping their child's antiepileptic drugs may be more stressful than starting them", says Dr Smith.

The type of epilepsy is one of the most important predictors of outcome. "Successful withdrawal is more likely in younger children and those with idiopathic epilepsy. Children with symptomatic epilepsies have a higher relapse rate, especially if they have associated cognitive and motor disabilities."

Dr Smith says that drug withdrawal should take place at a mutually convenient time for the child, family, school and the supervising practitioner. The withdrawal plan should also include preparing the family, school and other carers. "Each child must be managed individually while considering numerous factors regarding the epilepsy, the family and the wider community".

It is important not to stop treatment abruptly. The drugs are usually withdrawn over a minimum of six weeks.

For the complete article visit the *Australian Prescriber* website [www.australianprescriber.com](http://www.australianprescriber.com). *Australian Prescriber* is an independent peer-reviewed journal providing critical commentary on therapeutic topics for health professionals. It is published by National Prescribing Service Limited (NPS), an independent, non-profit organisation funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

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