

DEALING WITH A MISDIAGNOSIS OF EPILEPSY: A PATIENT'S STORY

It all started when I was 21 and working in a local pub. One afternoon, I had spent the afternoon in the garden before I went to work. It was a summer's day and there were a lot of people in the pub. I went to pour a pint of bitter and ended up in Stockport infirmary. I'd keeled over and had what was later described to me as an epileptic fit. I had a lump on my head, had bitten my tongue and had a fit. I went to the hospital and was told that anyone can have a fit – a one off fit is quite common. I was told to go home, have a couple of days off work and carry on.

I went back to work a week later and my boyfriend had come to pick me up after work. He said he was asking me where we wanted to go for tea but it seemed I wasn't listening to him – I remember turning round picking up my handbag and then waking up in hospital again, lump on my head, bitten tongue.

I then had extensive tests to find out what was wrong – all the tests were inconclusive about epilepsy. I was put on Epilim and sent away saying there you go for the rest of your life, three tablets a day – we'll see you at a later date. I carried on with the tablets and within six months I had put on about a stone in weight my hair had started to fall out my skin had got bad. We went to see a friend of ours, a GP, and he said if I was his daughter he wouldn't have me on the tablets.

So I came off the tablets and luckily found a cardiologist who gave me a tilt table test, where they monitor you on a computer and tilt you on a table to trigger a faint. I was told I had severely low blood pressure and started on three tablets a day from America and slowly over six months, came down to one tablet. The last four five years I haven't had anything wrong with me. I have got back a normal life after being told with Epilim I wouldn't be able to drive or drink.

For the tilt test I was told I couldn't eat or drink for a few hours beforehand and I was put on the bed and strapped in so I couldn't fall off and monitored on a computer and triggered to faint and then lowered back down. It was a great thing having the test because after that when I had the feeling I knew to lie down and relax and lay down until it passes."