

# EPILEPSY

The Six Protected Classes Policy ensures that all or substantially all medications in certain therapeutic areas are covered by Part D plans. Congress created this policy to protect Medicare beneficiaries with some of the most serious health conditions — **mental health challenges, cancer, HIV, epilepsy, and those at risk of organ rejection**. Congress has repeatedly reaffirmed bipartisan support for the six protected classes.

At least 1.1 million Medicare beneficiaries live with epilepsy. Epilepsy medications--known as anticonvulsants or anti-seizure medications--are not interchangeable. People with epilepsy who cannot access or are forced to switch from the most effective anticonvulsant are at increased risk of breakthrough seizures and related complications including injury, disability and death.

**Seizure-free individuals who are forced to switch their medication have nearly a 17% rate of seizure reoccurrence, compared to less than 3% among people remaining on the most effective medication.\***

Past proposals to change the six protected classes policy have included imposing more utilization management practices which would delay or completely impede access to prescribed anticonvulsants--even for people who are currently stable on their medication. These proposals so far have been rescinded because of the disastrous implications they would have on people with epilepsy. The six protected classes policy must be preserved so that people with epilepsy can have timely access to the most effective medications.



**"Without the Six Protected Classes, I would not have access to the medications that I need to be seizure free. Before I started receiving my medications through Medicare Part D, I was having 5-6 seizures a week. Fast forward to today, with assurance that my medication is covered and the ability to easily access it, my seizures have been significantly reduced to about 1 per month."**

**- Kristine, Iowa**



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\*Finamore, J.M., Sperling, M.R., Zhan, T., Nei, M., Skidmore, C.T., & Mintzer, S. (2016). Seizure outcome after switching antiepileptic drugs: A matched, prospective study. *Epilepsia* 57(8), 1294-300. Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/epi.13435>.

