



Information for You from Your Health Care Team

Epilepsy (Ep- a – lep – see): Facts and Figures

Epilepsy is found in about 2,500,000 people in the U.S. and there are about 125,000 that are diagnosed with Epilepsy each year. www.epilepsyfoundation.org

There are some people that have Epilepsy but do not have treatment for it. There are also some people who have this condition but do not know it.

Epilepsy occurs most in children and young adults. Epilepsy can develop at other times.

- One quarter of cases of epilepsy develop before the age of five.
- One half of all cases of epilepsy develop before the age of 25.

Causes of Epilepsy:

There is no known cause of in about 70% of cases of epilepsy.

In the other 30% of cases the following are the most common causes:

- Head trauma- the more severe the injury, the greater the risk of developing epilepsy.
- Brain tumor or stroke.
- Poisoning- including lead poisoning or alcohol poisoning.
- Infection- such as lupus or meningitis. Although less common epilepsy can be caused by, mumps or measles.
- Maternal Injury- an infection that affects the development of the baby during pregnancy.
- Family traits- Epilepsy can be inherited by family. Knowing if your family members have (or have had) epilepsy will be useful information when your doctors cannot find a cause of the epilepsy.

Treatment of epilepsy:

About 85% of seizures can be controlled using the current treatments. There are forms of epilepsy in children that are still difficult to treat. Types of treatment include:

- Medical -Your doctor may prescribe medicine to take to help control your seizures.
- Surgery- When medicine is not working to control your seizures your doctor may suggest an operation, which will help to control the seizures.
- Nutrition- A special high fat, high calorie diet may be helpful in some cases (mostly with children) when other treatment fails.

Speak Up If You Have Any Questions or Concerns



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SEIZURES

What is a seizure?

A seizure is also called a convulsion. It is a sudden attack of brain activity that causes you to lose control of your body. You may have shaking of your face, arms, or legs or look like you are staring off into space. Seizures may last seconds or minutes and can happen to people of any age. Your doctor may give you medicines to help prevent you from having a seizure.

What causes seizures?

The most common cause of seizures is epilepsy. It is a brain disease that may cause you to have more than one seizure. Other causes may include head injury, alcohol or other drugs, a high fever, a brain tumor, or an infection. Sometimes it is not known what causes seizures.

What are signs of seizures?

- An aura, which may be something you see or feel, can be a warning sign.
- You may pass out.
- You are staring off into space, and will not answer when you are spoken to.
- Your face or part of your body shakes.
- You may urinate or have a bowel movement without knowing it, or you may throw up.
- After the seizure, you may feel irritable, not sure where you are or be difficult to wake up.

What to do if you have a seizure?

- If you have any warning that you may have a seizure, lie down in a safe place where you can't hurt yourself.
- Teach your family and close friends what to do if you have a seizure.
- **Call your doctor when the seizure is over.**

What to do if the person with you has a seizure?

- Stay calm.
- Keep the person from falling onto harmful objects. **Do not move the person unless the person is in danger.** Move hard or sharp objects out of the person's way.
- Do not force anything into the person's mouth or try to open clenched jaws. Turn the person on his or her side when the shaking movement stops or if he or she is vomiting.
- When the seizure is over, the person may not know what happened or where they are. They also may be very hard to wake up. Reassure the person that he or she is all right. Help him or her to rest and relax
- **Call the doctor**

What can you do to protect yourself?

- Your caregiver may have prescribed medicine to prevent seizures. Take medicines as directed. Do not stop taking the medicine without talking to your caregiver first.
- Avoid activities in which a seizure would cause danger to you or to others. Do not operate dangerous machinery, swim alone, or climb in high or dangerous places such as ladders or roofs. Do not drive until your caregiver says you may.
- Wear an emergency medical identification bracelet with information about your seizures. If you have a seizure, people around you will know what is wrong and get appropriate help

Speak Up Any if You Have Any Questions or Concerns.



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Preventing Seizures (Epilepsy)

For most people with seizures, taking anti-seizure medicine as directed by your doctor is the best way to control seizures. But for people with seizures, it is also important to avoid certain situations or conditions known as **triggers**. These triggers increase the chance of having a seizure.

To understand your seizures, talk with your doctor. It helps to keep a written journal of **when** seizures occur and **what** you were doing at the time of the seizure.

Seizure Triggers

- **Medication Mistakes:** Keeping the right amount of medicine in the blood is an important part of seizure control. A seizure can happen even if one dose of medication is missed. Taking too much medicine can also cause a seizure, but this is less common. Talk to your doctor if you think your medicine is causing your seizures. Do not change your medicine unless you **first** talk to your doctor.
- **Lack of Sleep:** Lack of sleep- also known as sleep deprivation- can trigger a seizure; make it stronger or even last longer.
- **Stress:** Daily life can be stressful for almost everyone. But for people with seizures, stressful situations can be a trigger. Even adjusting to life with seizures can be stressful. If stress causes a lack of sleep, the risk of seizures is worse.
- **Drinking Alcohol:** Alcohol by itself is a seizure trigger. Drinking alcohol can be dangerous for people with seizures.
 - * Alcohol can be dangerous when mixed with seizure medications.
 - * You may forget to take your seizure medicine when drinking alcohol.
 - * People who drink may need medical help to safely stop drinking.
- **Mixing Drugs:** Over the counter medicines contain ingredients that trigger seizures. It is important for people with seizures to talk to your doctor or pharmacist before taking over the counter medicine. Illegal drugs such as cocaine, PCP, amphetamines and narcotics can all cause seizures. Stopping these illegal drugs can also cause seizures. Cocaine can cause very serious seizures.
- **Hormonal Changes:** Hormone levels change during the menstrual cycle. Some women with epilepsy have more seizures during their menstrual cycle because of hormonal changes. Girls going through puberty and women going through menopause can also have problems controlling seizures because of hormonal changes.

- Sensitivity to Light: Flickering or flashing lights can trigger seizures- especially in children. Similar triggers include computers graphics, video-games, watching TV, strobe lights, sun glare on water and geometric patterns. Looking out the window when riding in a car can trigger seizures too.
- Other Triggers: Drinking a lot of caffeine, tea, cola, taking herbal supplement- are stimulants, vitamin deficiencies, and having low blood sugar.

Please Speak Up if You Have Any Questions or Concerns

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