

1. Keep calm. Calm other people down. Look for a medical I.D. bracelet.
2. Put something flat and soft under his head.
3. Move anything out of the way that he might hit his head on.

What do you do if someone has a falling seizure and shakes?

No. Epilepsy is no different from any other health problem. It happens because something in your brain doesn't work quite right for a short time. It is a problem of how things work, like many other illnesses.

Could seizures be caused by an evil spirit?

No. They should be out in the world with other people. A person who is active and busy is not as likely to have seizures.

Should people with epilepsy try to stay calm and quiet at home so they don't have seizures?



No. But life may have been hard for them and things that happened in the past can change some people and make them more emotional.

Are people with epilepsy more emotional than other people?

Can epilepsy be cured by prayer or laying on of hands?

The power of faith and prayer is very strong. No one can say that kind of cure could never happen. But it doesn't happen very often. The best chance of living a normal life with epilepsy is to take epilepsy medicine everyday and be as active as you can be.



Does epilepsy make a person retarded?

No. Epilepsy and retardation are different conditions. Sometimes a bad injury to the brain can cause both conditions in the same person.



Does epilepsy get worse as you get older?

No. It usually gets a little bit better as you get older. Some children grow out of epilepsy.

Can people with epilepsy join the army?

Only if they have had no seizures and taken no medicines for five years. Males do have to sign up for the draft, though.

It might in a very few people, but not in most.

Does getting overheated cause seizures?

In some people it does. But not in every one.

Does stress make you have a seizure?



Most times there is no way to tell. Not taking epilepsy medicine regularly is most often the reason someone with epilepsy has a seizure.

What makes a person have a seizure?

No. They are different conditions.

Is epilepsy a mental illness?

Another kind makes you act as if you were only half awake. You can't control your actions. You don't know what happened when you wake up. This is called a COMPLEX PARTIAL or TEMPORAL LOBE seizure. Other seizures can make you fall, or jerk just one arm or leg, or change the way things look, sound, taste, or feel. Seizures are sometimes called fits, or spells, or falling spells.



How can I find out more about epilepsy?

Call the Epilepsy Foundation free of charge at 800-332-1000. The Foundation will answer your questions and will help you find the Epilepsy Foundation affiliate nearest you. You can also visit the Foundation's web site at www.epilepsyfoundation.org.

This booklet is intended to provide basic information about epilepsy to the general public. It is not intended to, nor does it, constitute medical advice, and readers are warned against changing medical schedules or life activities based on the information it contains without first consulting a physician.



800-332-1000
www.epilepsyfoundation.org



One kind makes you fall, get stiff, and then shake. It is called a TONIC-CLONIC or GRAND MAL seizure. Another kind makes you stop and stare for a moment or two. It is called an ABSENCE or PETTIT MAL seizure.

What do they look like?

They are sudden electrical changes in your mind or your body that you can't control.

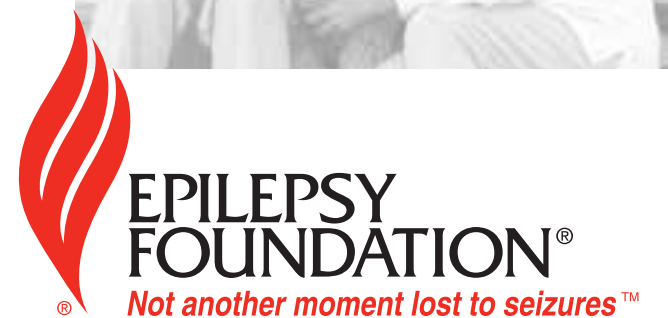
What are seizures?

Epilepsy is a disorder of the brain. For a short time, the brain does not work the way it usually does. The body gets the wrong signals, and these cause seizures.

What is epilepsy?



Answering Your Questions About Epilepsy



What do you do for a “wandering around” seizure?

1. Keep calm and tell other people what’s happening. Say it’s epilepsy, not drugs.
2. Talk in a quiet, friendly voice and guide him gently away from anything that could hurt him. Don’t grab hold.
3. Stay with him till he wakes up and knows where he is.
4. Offer help getting home.

Does epilepsy run in families?

Sometimes it does. Most times it happens without anyone else in the family having it at all.



How do doctors know someone has epilepsy?

By finding out as much as they can about the person’s health, about what the seizure looked like, and what was happening before it began. They do brainwave (EEG) tests and other tests as well.

Could epilepsy be caused by something bad a person did long ago, or something the mother or father did?

No. It is not caused by how parents act. It is not caused by anything a person does to himself.

The only time a person’s actions could lead to epilepsy is if he abuses drugs or drinks very heavily. Sometimes drug or alcohol abuse can make the brain more likely to have seizures. Most of the time there is no cause that anyone can find for someone having epilepsy - it just happens.

How does epilepsy get started?

Sometimes from a bad head injury. Sometimes from a brain infection. Sometimes from alcohol or drug abuse. Sometimes from something that happened before birth. Sometimes no one knows why.



How many people have epilepsy?

About one in every one hundred. That adds up to thousands of people in every large city.

How do doctors treat epilepsy?

Mostly with medicines. Some children are helped with a special diet. Some people may be helped by a brain operation or by an implanted nerve stimulator if the medicines don’t work.

Do the medicines cure epilepsy?

No. They stop seizures only if they are taken every day as the doctor has said.

How long do you have to take them?

Maybe only for a year or two. Maybe all your life. You can’t tell in the beginning.



Can you hurt others during a seizure?

Not on purpose, because you don’t know what’s going on around you while the seizure is happening. If you fall and shake, there’s no way others could get hurt. If you’re dazed and wandering around and someone grabs you, you might hit back by instinct.

Can vitamins and health foods stop seizures?

There’s no proof that they do. A healthy diet gives you the vitamins and minerals you need. Having epilepsy does not mean you need more than other people.

Can you drive if you have epilepsy?

Yes, if you get a license. You can get a license if you have had no seizures at all for some time. Some states make a person wait for a year since his last seizure before giving him a license. In other states the time is not as long. Check with Motor Vehicles about the rules in your state. Don’t risk an accident by driving if you are still having seizures.



How well do they work?

If you take them on time, every day, they can work very well. Eight out of ten people won’t have seizures if they take their medicine every day as the doctor has said.

Do people get hooked on these drugs?

They need them to stop seizures, and if they stop taking them, they’ll have seizures. But they don’t get addicted the way a person can with street drugs.

Can you die during a seizure?

Death during a seizure hardly ever happens. The risk is highest when a person has seizures that don’t stop after a few minutes. A person having this type of seizure should be taken to the emergency room.

Should you call an ambulance?

Not if you know someone has epilepsy and the seizure is a short one. If it goes on and on, or if another starts right away, or if he doesn’t wake up, call for help.

If someone is diabetic, or pregnant, or has been hurt during the seizure, or seems sick in any other way, call an ambulance.

Can a person with epilepsy hold a job?

Yes. People who have epilepsy can work in many kinds of jobs. If you have a lot of spells, it is much harder to get a job.

Can children with epilepsy go to regular school?

Yes. And most of them can be in the regular classes in school.

