



Absence Epilepsy Syndrome



Absence seizures are brief seizures during which the patient is unresponsive. It begins simultaneously on both sides of the brain, making it a generalized onset seizure. Absence seizures are characterized by recurrent seizures that cause staring or becoming unresponsive. Eyes may repeatedly blink or roll up briefly. Absence seizures often cause a short period of "blinking out" or staring into space and can cause a temporary loss of awareness. Some children have repetitive movements like mouth chewing.





Symptoms

Seizures begin and end abruptly, lasting only a few seconds. Absence seizures are often mistaken for daydreaming. Absence Epilepsy Syndrome is also known as petit mal seizure. Like other kinds of seizures, they are caused by brief abnormal electrical activity in a person's brain. Children's absence syndrome can start as early as age 3. Children may have many absence seizures on a given day, and the seizures may go unnoticed. It is not uncommon for a child to experience ten or more seizures on a given day. These types of seizures are often set off by a period of hyperventilation. Some children will experience atypical absence seizures. Atypical absence seizures last longer, up to 20 seconds or more. Many children with Atypical absence seizures have developmental problems.



Symptoms



The child may also have other types of seizures that are hard to control. Many have Lennox-Gastaut syndrome. These absence seizures are atypical because they may be longer, have a slower onset and offset, and involve different symptoms. Atypical absence seizures start with staring into space, usually with a blank look. There is usually a change in muscle tone and movement, such as:

- Fluttering of the eyelids
- Repeatedly blinking over and over
- Chewing movements
- Rubbing fingers together or making other hand motions

After an atypical absence seizure, a person will usually be awake but won't have any memory of the seizure. They may feel tired or confused, especially if they have had multiple seizures.



Treatments



The exact cause of atypical absence seizures remains unclear. Many children appear to have a genetic predisposition to absence seizures. Researchers think genes cause changes in the brain that make some people more likely to experience them.

Sometimes, seizures are triggered by flashing lights or when the person breathes faster and more deeply than usual. Some people experience symptoms similar to those of an epileptic seizure but without any unusual electrical activity in the brain. When this happens, it is known as a non-epileptic seizure (NES). NES is most often caused by mental stress or a physical condition.

Absence seizures are treated with antiseizure medications. Ethosuximide is the preferred medication to treat absence seizures. Other medications that your healthcare provider might try include valproate, lamotrigine, and topiramate.



Treatments

Many children outgrow absence seizures in their teens. Nutrients that may reduce seizure frequency include vitamin B6, magnesium, vitamin E, manganese, taurine, dimethylglycine, and omega-3 fatty acids. CBD can help prevent some types of seizures in some people. Clinical trials have demonstrated a significant reduction in seizures for people taking CBD to treat Lennox-Gastaut, Dravet syndrome. Children may be able to taper off antiseizure medications under a doctor's supervision after they've been seizure-free for two years. Following a diet that's high in fat and low in carbohydrates, known as a ketogenic diet, can improve seizure control in some people.

