



Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a brain disorder that causes people to be more susceptible to repeated, unprovoked seizures. Although it affects people of all ages, races, and ethnic backgrounds, epilepsy is more common in young children than adults. Epilepsy affects about 1 percent of children. A child may be diagnosed with epilepsy if they have two or more unprovoked seizures (or one unprovoked seizure with the likelihood of more).





Epilepsy

The seizures in epilepsy can be caused by several underlying problems such as brain injury, birth trauma, hereditary genetic conditions, development disorders, or a combination of these. Still, it often seems to appear out of nowhere. In most cases, the cause of epilepsy is completely unknown. Epilepsy can cause changes in your child's behavior and personality or lead to other neurological problems, learning disabilities, or psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression.

Children with epilepsy differ from adults because their brains are more prone to seizures. It affects children at different ages and to different degrees. Most forms of childhood epilepsy are outgrown and can be controlled with proper diagnosis and medication; however, some forms can lead to lifelong problems.



Epilepsy

Although rare, when medication is not enough to manage your child's seizures, there are surgical options to treat epilepsy. Epilepsy can cause changes in your child's behavior and personality or lead to other neurological problems, learning disabilities, or psychological disorders such as anxiety and depression.

Therefore, a timely diagnosis and treatment of epileptic seizures are essential to give a child an opportunity to return to a normal course of development. This may be a frightening experience for you and your family.

What is a seizure?

Seizures result from excessive and abnormal activity of the brain cells that temporarily interrupt the brain's normal functions.



Seizures

This leads to neurological signs and symptoms, such as confusion, loss of consciousness, convulsions of the body either partially or entirely, freezing, blank staring, and unresponsiveness to outside stimulation. Sometimes seizures are easy to recognize; however, some types may be very subtle with no obvious outward signs.

Types of Seizures

Epilepsy can involve many different types of seizures, and it is not uncommon for children with epilepsy to have more than one type of seizure. The type of seizure depends on where the abnormal activity first starts in the brain, how far it spreads, and what happens during the seizure.

Seizures could be short, subtle, and barely noticeable, or they can be frightening for families to witness. Pediatric seizures can be described in two broad categories, generalized and partial (focal).



Seizures

Focal onset seizures:

Start from and affect just one part of the brain.

Focal aware seizures:

Seizures affect a portion of the body or one side of the body or extremities when a patient is fully aware of the seizure and can remember the event afterward.

Focal impaired awareness seizures:

Focal seizures where a patient is unaware of the event due to altered or impaired consciousness, therefore, not remembering the event.

Absence seizures:

A brief period of loss of consciousness is associated with blank staring, at times with eyelid fluttering.

Focal to bilateral tonic-clonic seizures:

When focal seizures spread from one side of the brain to both sides.



Seizures Types

Tonic seizures:

Sudden or gradual stiffening of extremities on one or both sides of the body.

Clonic seizures:

Repeated rhythmic jerking movements of one or both sides of the body.

Tonic-clonic seizures:

Involve repetitive jerking movements or convulsions due to rhythmic muscle relaxation and tightening.

If your child's primary care doctor suspects epilepsy, your child may be referred to a pediatric (child) neurologist. A pediatric neurologist is a doctor who is an expert in diagnosing and treating conditions that affect your child's brain and nerves.

Pediatric neurologists can also be further trained as epilepsy specialists (epileptologists).



Seizures

There is no cure for epilepsy. Most people with epilepsy can become seizure-free by taking anti-seizure medication, which is also called anti-epileptic medication or anticonvulsants. Anticonvulsants prevent or control seizures, relieve pain, and treat symptoms of certain psychiatric disorders. Epilepsy is usually treated by medications and, in some cases, by surgery, devices, or dietary changes. Healthy lifestyle changes can go a long way toward reducing the risk of having a seizure in some patients.

Lifestyle considerations:

- Sleep quality
- Chronic anxiety, depression, or excessive stress
- Alcohol usage
- Caffeine usage
- Herbal remedies usage

