



Focus on

Epilepsy is a condition which is caused by abnormal electrical activity in the brain, and these electrical activities can lead to changes in mental and bodily functions, causing a type of a 'fit.' Epilepsy is a central nervous system (neurological) disorder in which brain activity becomes abnormal, causing seizures or periods of unusual behaviour, sensations and sometimes loss of awareness.

Anyone can develop epilepsy. Epilepsy affects both males and females of all races, ethnic backgrounds and ages. Epilepsy is not infectious and it is not contagious!

THIS IS HOW IT HAPPENS:

Grand mal

- Starts with/without an aura – something giving one an indication that a fit is going to happen, such as cramps, exotic image, taste, or smell.
- The “cry” – contraction of respiratory muscles.
- Tonic phase – all muscles of the body contract and remain in spasm for about 30 seconds (tongue may be bitten).
- Clonic phase – characterised by violent muscle contraction.
- Recovery phase – some patients may sleep for an hour and may be confused or alert.

Petit mal

- There is a very brief loss of consciousness.
- Person stops what he or she is doing and stares vacantly ahead.

Myoclonic jerks

- Fits consist of muscular contractions in one area of the body and spread to other parts of the body.

Status Epilepticus

- In this case, a person experiences one fit after another without regaining consciousness. This is a dangerous form of epilepsy.

CAUSES OF EPILEPSY:

Anything that disturbs the normal pattern of activity in the brain can trigger epilepsy. The cause can be illness, brain damage, or abnormal development of the brain. No cause can be determined for about threequarters of the cases of epilepsy. Because epilepsy has so many causes and can be linked to a number of other conditions, it is sometimes very difficult to determine the exact cause of a particular case.



Common causes include:

- Environmental causes e.g., exposure to lead, use of illicit drugs or alcohol.
- Head injuries.
- An unborn child can be affected when the mother is abusing drugs or smoking.
- Brain tumours.
- Hereditary causes.
- Brain chemistry.
- Some fits can be caused by a reaction to drugs, high temperature or Diabetes.



Epilepsy

Triggers that cause seizures

Some people may find that seizures occur in a pattern or are more likely to occur in certain situations. Sometimes these connections are just by chance, but other times it's not. Keeping track of any factors that may come before a seizure (also called seizure triggers) can help you recognize when a seizure may be coming. You can then be prepared and learn how to lessen the chance that a seizure may occur at this time.

Some people will notice one or two triggers very easily. For example, their seizures may occur only during sleep or when waking up. Other people may notice that some triggers bother them only when a lot is going on at once or during a "high risk" time for them, like when they are under a lot of stress or sick.

TAKING YOUR MEDICATION REGULARLY IS ESSENTIAL TO CONTROLLING YOUR SEIZURES

Taking seizure medications regularly, and as recommended by your doctor, is vitally important! It gives you the best chance to achieve the goals of epilepsy therapy: no seizures and no side effects. On the flip side, noncompliance with seizure medicines can have significant and possibly disastrous consequences.

Taking medicines regularly is easiest when you know about epilepsy, treatment, and how to manage your seizures and medications. Managing medicines isn't easy, but it certainly can be done! Think of it as a team approach involving your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, counselor, family and friends, and of course YOU. You are the captain of the team, because only you can decide if you are going to take the medicine. Only you can work together with the team to find ways to manage your medication best.



Here's a few points about why adherence is so important.

- You need to follow the doctor's directions. If those directions are confusing or complex, ask questions until you are sure you understand.
- Seizure medicines must be taken each and every day as prescribed. If the right amount is not taken at the right time, the medicine may not be able to prevent seizures, or might cause unwanted side effects.
- If the first medicine doesn't work, others may be more successful. Finding the right medicine at the right dose taken at the right time(s) of the day requires teamwork. This is why it is so important that you work with your doctor to achieve the right dose.
- Any medication change recommended by your doctor is based on the assumption that you have been taking the medicine the way it was intended. If this isn't true, then the change may not work or may be the wrong thing to do!

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Creating a safe working environment for people with uncontrolled seizures requires co-workers and employers to be adaptable to the safety adjustments.

- Develop a plan for seizure first aid with your employer and involve relevant co-workers (who may be present when seizures occur). Make sure this plan indicates when to call for emergency care.
- Use the elevator instead of stairs.
- Only climb to heights that would not cause injury if a seizure occurred.
- If seizures are not controlled, talk to your doctor or nurse about how seizures should be handled at work.



What to do if someone has a seizure (fit)

If you see someone having a seizure or fit, there are some simple things you can do to help. It might be scary to witness, but do not panic. If you're with someone having a seizure:

- Only move them if they're in danger, such as near a busy road or hot cooker.
- Cushion their head if they're on the ground.
- Loosen any tight clothing around their neck, such as a collar or tie, to aid breathing.
- Turn them on to their side after their convulsions stop.
- Stay with them and talk to them calmly until they recover.
- Note the time the seizure starts and finishes.
- If the person is in a wheelchair, put the brakes on and leave any seatbelt or harness on. Support them gently and cushion their head, but do not try to move them.

Do not put anything in their mouth, including your fingers. They should not have any food or drink until they have fully recovered.

For more information or assistance, talk to a healthcare provider at your nearest Platinum Health medical facility.

Source:

www.epilepsy.com/treatment/medicines/medication-schedule
www.epilepsy.com/preparedness-safety/staying-safe/safety-work



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