

EPILEPSY/SEIZURE DISORDER

Epilepsy is a medical condition that produces seizures affecting a variety of mental and physical functions. It is also called a seizure disorder. Seizures happen when clusters of nerve cells in the brain signal abnormally, which may briefly alter a person's consciousness, movements or actions. Instead of discharging electrical energy in a controlled manner, the brain cells keep firing. The result may be a surge of energy through the brain, causing unconsciousness and contractions of the muscles. If only part of the brain is affected, it may cloud awareness, block normal communication, and/or produce a variety of undirected, uncontrolled, unorganized movements.

- There are many different types of seizures. People may experience just one type or more than one. The kind of seizure a person has depends on which part and how much of the brain is affected by the electrical disturbance that produces seizures. The symptoms of a seizure may affect any part of the body. Most seizures last only a minute or two, although confusion afterwards may last longer. Experts divide seizures into generalized seizures (absence, atonic, tonic-clonic, myoclonic), partial (simple and complex) seizures, gelastic seizures, dacrystic seizures, non-epileptic seizures and statuepilepticus. Generally, the most frequent cause of an unexpected seizure is failure to take the medication as prescribed. Other factors include ingesting substances, hormone fluctuations, stress, sleep patterns and photosensitivity.
- While medications and other treatments help many people of all ages who live with epilepsy, more than a million people continue to have seizures that can severely limit their school achievements, employment prospects and participation in all of life's experiences. It strikes most often among the very young and the very old, although anyone can develop epilepsy at any age. In the U.S., it affects more than 300,000 children under the age of 15 – more than 90,000 of whom have seizures that cannot be adequately treated.

Source: Epilepsy Foundation <http://www.epilepsyfoundation.org/index.cfm>