



Epilepsy & Seizure FACTS

What is Epilepsy?

- Brief disturbances in the normal electrical function of the brain
- Two or more unprovoked seizures
- Causes: Oxygen deprivation (e.g., during childbirth), Brain infections (e.g., meningitis, encephalitis), Head injury, Stroke, Brain tumors, Certain genetic disorders (Down syndrome; tuberous sclerosis), Poisoning (lead, carbon monoxide)

What are Seizures?

- Electrical system malfunctions of the brain
- Cause a change in awareness, movements, sensations, and behavior
- Some are barely noticeable while others cause muscle jerks or loss of consciousness
- Can last a few seconds to several minutes
- Acute causes of seizures include: High fever, low blood sugar, alcohol or drug withdrawal, brain concussion

Triggers of Seizures:

- Failure to take epilepsy medication (most common)
- Stress, anxiety, anger, extreme fatigue
- Illness
- Photosensitivity
- Hormone fluctuations
- Excessive use and withdrawal from alcohol or drugs
- Change in medications

Managing Seizures:

1. Protect person from injury.
2. Keep calm and reassure other people who may be nearby.
3. Time the seizure with your watch.
4. Cradle the head or place something soft under it.
5. Don't hold the person down or try to stop movements.
6. Remove all dangerous objects.
7. Stay with the person until the seizure ends.
8. After the seizure, turn the person on his or her side to provide an open airway and allow fluids to drain from the mouth.
9. Check for normal breathing and injuries.

Symptoms of Generalized Seizures

- Stiffening of muscles- back, legs, arms (tonic phase)
- Followed by jerking of the limbs and face (clonic phase)
- May cry out
- Loss of consciousness
- Fall to the ground
- Extended period of confusion and fatigue afterward

Symptoms of Simple Partial Seizures

- 30-60 seconds
- No loss of consciousness
- Sudden jerking
- Starts with hand and moves to arm, leg, or side of body
- Sensory phenomena
- Transient weakness or loss of sensation

Symptoms of Complex Partial Seizures

- Lasts 1 to 2 minutes
- May have aura (or warning – most typical is sensation in stomach)
- Automatism (such as lip smacking, picking at clothes, fumbling)
- Unaware of environment
- Actions and movements are unorganized, confused, and unfocused
- Amnesia for seizure events
- May wander