



What is epilepsy?

Epilepsy is a long-term condition that affects the brain and causes frequent seizures. There are two main types of seizures – generalised and focal. Generalised seizures occur when there is abnormal electrical activity that affects all or most of the brain. Symptoms tend to be general and involve much of your body. In focal seizures, the burst of electrical activity starts in one part of the brain and these seizures tend to have localised symptoms.

What are the symptoms?

Seizures can affect people in different ways, depending on which part of the brain is involved. The main symptoms of epilepsy are repeated seizures. These are sudden bursts of electrical activity in the brain that temporarily affect how it works.

Other possible symptoms of epilepsy include:

- Uncontrolled jerking and shaking, also known as a fit.
- Losing awareness and staring blankly into space.
- Becoming stiff and collapsing.
- Strange sensations such as a rising feeling in the tummy, detecting unusual smells or tastes in your mouth, and a tingling feeling in your arms or legs.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Seizures can occur when you're awake or asleep and can sometimes be triggered by certain things such as feeling very tired.

A ketogenic diet (or low carbohydrate diet) can help control seizures.

You may need treatment for life, but you might be able to stop treatment if your seizures disappear over time.



To register with Bromley Well:
Freephone 0808 278 7898
Or register online:
www.bromleywell.org.uk/refer

Contact Lifestyle Support direct
07985 431484 / 07985 444210
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What are the causes?

In epilepsy, the electrical signals in the brain become scrambled and abnormal sudden bursts of electrical activity occur leading to seizures. In many cases, it's not clear why this happens. It could be partly caused by your genes affecting how your brain works.

Epilepsy can also be caused by damage to the brain due to:

- A stroke
- A brain tumour
- A severe head injury
- Drug abuse or alcohol misuse
- Brain infection
- Lack of oxygen during birth

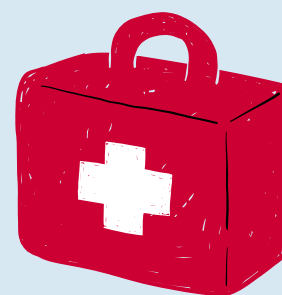
What about treatment?

The aim of treatment is to help people with epilepsy have fewer seizures or stop having seizures completely. Medicines called anti-epileptic drugs are mostly used in the treatment of epilepsy. Tell your doctor if your medicine is causing unpleasant side effects. Don't skip doses or stop taking your medication without getting medical advice, as this could cause you to have a seizure.

WHAT TO DO IN AN EMERGENCY

Call 999 for an ambulance if you or someone:

- Is having a seizure for the first time.
- Has a seizure that lasts more than 5 minutes.
- Has lots of seizures in a row.
- Has breathing problems or has seriously injured themselves.



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Some myths

Myth 1: Flashing lights cause seizures for everyone

No, triggers are different for everyone. It is true that people with epilepsy can have photosensitivity (seizures due to visual stimuli) but the most common triggers noted for people with epilepsy are stress, alcohol and lack of sleep.



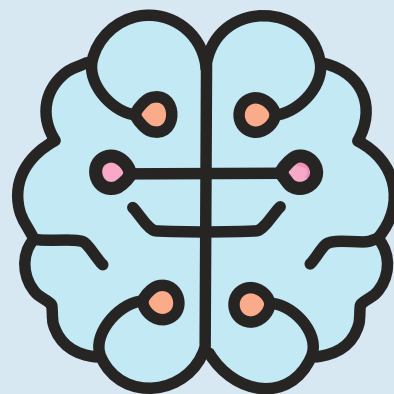
Myth 2: If you are having a fit, you are at risk of swallowing your tongue

This is not true. It is physically impossible to swallow your tongue and this myth has led to people dealing with seizures inappropriately. If someone is having a seizure please do not put anything in their mouth as they do not have control of their muscles and this may cause further injury to their teeth or jaw. Put a cushion or something soft under their head as protection. You can place them in the recovery position after a seizure to observe them and prevent their airway being blocked.

OTHER TREATMENT OPTIONS

Surgery to remove a small part of the brain that is causing seizures.

A procedure to put a small electrical device inside the body that can help control seizures.



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FURTHER RESOURCES

Epilepsy Action

www.epilepsy.org.uk/

Helpline 0800 800 5050

A national charity providing information and advice about living with epilepsy. A really useful website packed with information and advice on areas such as treatment, wellbeing, daily life, driving, and advice for carers.

Epilepsy Society

epilepsysociety.org.uk/

Helpline 01494601400

Email

helpline@epilepsysociety.org.uk

A national medical charity pioneering research and offering specialist assessments. Epilepsy Society have a helpline for anyone affected by epilepsy.

NHS Conditions Epilepsy

www.nhs.uk/conditions/epilepsy/

NHS conditions pages contain information about the causes, symptoms and treatment of epilepsy and advice for people living with the condition.

References: NHS UK: www.nhs.uk/conditions/epilepsy/#causes-of-epilepsy
NICE: www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng217

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