

> 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 if the abnormal electrical activity 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 tend to have localised symptoms.

> 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. However, this could partly be 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 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 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, unusual smells or taste and a tingling feeling in your arms or legs

> What about my medicines?

The aim of treatment is to help people with epilepsy to 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 without getting medical advice, as this could cause you to have a seizure.

Did you know that?

- 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 (low carbohydrate) can help control seizures.
- You may need treatment for life but you might be able to stop treatment if your seizures disappear over time.

What to do in an emergency

Call 999 for 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

Other treatment options

- Surgery to remove a small part of the brain that's causing seizures
- A procedure to put a small electrical device inside the body that can help control seizures

NHS UK: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/epilepsy/#causes-of-epilepsy>

NICE: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg137/chapter/Introduction>

To contact Bromley Well call the Single Point of Access on **0808 278 7898** or Lifestyle Support on **07985 444210 / 07985 433045** Email enquiry@bromleywell.org.uk www.bromleywell.org.uk



[@BromleyWellService](https://www.facebook.com/BromleyWellService)



[@BromleyWell](https://twitter.com/BromleyWell)

> Further resources and services

Epilepsy Action

Helpline: 0800 800 5050

www.epilepsy.org.uk

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

Helpline: 01494601400

www.epilepsysociety.org.uk

[NHS Conditions Epilepsy](#)

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

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