



Understanding epilepsy

Epilepsy is a broad term that encompasses a variety of brain disorders that cause seizures. It is one of the most common brain conditions and can affect people of any age.



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

The primary symptom of epilepsy is seizures. A seizure is a brief change in brain activity. It can last anywhere from a few seconds to several minutes.

Someone may be diagnosed with epilepsy if they have two or more seizures unrelated to another cause, such as a fever or low blood sugar.

Seizures can look different in different people. Signs may include:

- Confusion
- Staring
- Rapid blinking
- Twitching or shaking
- Falling to the ground
- Loss of consciousness
- Body stiffening

CAUSES

While the cause of epilepsy is unknown for many people, certain conditions impact the brain and may lead to the development of epilepsy:

- Brain tumor
- Traumatic brain injury
- Infection in the brain from a virus, bacteria, or parasite
- Stroke
- Oxygen deprivation of the brain
- Certain genetic disorders
- Certain neurological diseases



TREATMENT

If left untreated, recurring seizures impact quality of life, increase the risk of injury, and may shorten life expectancy.

Common treatments include:

- **Medicine:** Anti-seizure medication works by controlling improper brain signals.
- **Surgery:** This can remove the affected area if seizure activity occurs in only one part of the brain.
- **Diet:** A specialized ketogenic diet may be effective for some types of epilepsy, especially in children.
- **Nerve stimulation:** An implanted device stimulates the vagus nerve to reduce seizures.

SELF-CARE

Successful epilepsy treatment takes the combined efforts of healthcare professionals and the person with epilepsy. Many self-care practices aid in reducing seizure triggers and keeping the body healthy:

- Take all medications as prescribed.
- Keep a record of seizures and any potential triggers.
- Get plenty of sleep every night.
- Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet.
- Get regular physical activity and movement.