

SEIZURES AND EPILEPSY

A seizure is an episode of involuntary behavior caused by abnormal electrical activity of the brain. It is important to understand that not all seizures are fall-down, jerking episodes. Epilepsy occurs when someone has recurring seizures. Seizures can be caused by head injuries, brain infections, brain tumors, disorders that occur during fetal development and many other conditions/diseases. For many people who experience seizures, however, a specific cause cannot be determined.

Symptoms

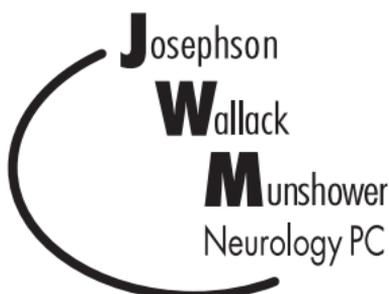
There are many types of seizures, and they can last anywhere from a few seconds to several minutes. Symptoms vary by individual and can include:

- Convulsing
- Body jerking and body stiffening
- Eyelid fluttering and vision distortion
- Staring spells
- Confusion
- Speech difficulty
- Loss of consciousness

Diagnosing Epilepsy

Accurate diagnosis of seizures by a neurologist is essential. The neurologist will evaluate the patient by taking a thorough medical history and performing a neurological examination. Further testing such as EEG (electroencephalograph)/ video EEG and imaging may be performed.

Seizures can be triggered by certain factors such as stress, lack of sleep, hormone changes, medications and bright flashing lights. It is important for patients to discuss any triggers related to their own seizures when they meet with their neurologist. Women who have epilepsy should discuss their condition with a physician before they plan to become pregnant.



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Treating and Controlling Epilepsy

There are a wide variety anti-epileptic medications available that can control or reduce the number of seizures for most people. The type of medication will depend on various factors including the patient's age, the type of seizure they are having and any other underlying medical conditions that they have. Vagus Nerve Stimulators (known as VNS) and surgery are also treatment options that are used for some patients.

Seizure First Aid

- DO call 911 if the person is confused, sustains an injury, has multiple seizures or does not start breathing within one minute of the seizure. Start mouth-to-mouth resuscitation in this case.
- DO turn the person on one side to allow saliva to drain from the mouth.
- DO clear the area of sharp/hard objects, and remove eye glasses.
- DO make sure someone stays with the person until he/she is fully alert.
- DON'T restrain the person.
- DON'T approach the person if he/she appears angry or aggressive.
- DON'T offer the person food or drink or force anything into the mouth.



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