



What is epilepsy?

Epilepsy is the name that doctors use to talk about a disorder in which a person has had 2 or more seizures that just "come out of the blue." Most people who have had 2 seizures will have more. The person and the doctor may decide that medicine is needed to stop them from happening again.

What is a seizure?

A seizure is a sudden burst of electricity in your brain, very much like a tiny bolt of lightning. This electricity is a signal that causes your body to feel different, or makes your body do things that you can't control. Sometimes the electrical signal only reaches part of your brain. Then a part of your body, like an arm or a leg, may move on its own. If the signal goes all through your brain, you may shake all over or may fall asleep for a short time. The whole seizure is usually very short - only a few seconds or perhaps a minute or so.

Why do I have epilepsy?

Doctors aren't always sure why kids have epilepsy. Some kids get epilepsy by hurting their head in a bad accident. Others have an illness that injures their brain. For most kids the doctors cannot find out what causes the epilepsy.

Can my brother or sister catch epilepsy from me?

No one can catch epilepsy from you. It is not a disease like a cold, which is spread by germs. It is something that happens inside your brain and you can't pass it to anybody else. If more than one person in your family has epilepsy, it's not because they caught it from you.

Can I stop my seizures?

No one can magically make seizures stop by wishing. You can't control the electrical signals in your brain just by trying. But many kids who have epilepsy will not have more seizures if they take the right kind of medicine. These seizure medicines stop the seizures from happening. If your medicine doesn't stop all your seizures, it will probably help you not to have so many, or to have smaller ones.

Why do I have to take seizure medication every day?

People who take seizure medicines have to take them every day, or even many times a day. Imagine that the medicine is putting the seizures to sleep inside your brain, but they don't go away. If you forget to take your medicine, the seizures might wake up. Even if you don't have any seizures for a long time, you still have epilepsy, so the seizures probably would wake up again if you stopped taking the medicine.

Can I die from having a seizure?

Seizures can be very scary. If you wake up after a seizure and everyone around you is worried, you may worry too. But the truth is that kids almost never die from having a seizure. Most seizures last just a few minutes and kids are back to normal after a short rest.



Will I ever get better?

Doctors cannot always see into the future. For many kids with epilepsy, the seizures do go away when they get older. Other kids keep having seizures all their life. Doctors do know that for most kids, seizure medicines will keep the seizures from happening. If you have a kind of epilepsy that usually goes away, your doctor may say it's OK to try stopping your medicine when you haven't had any seizures for a long time. Don't stop taking your medicine unless the doctor says it's OK.

Can I ride my bicycle? Can I go swimming?

Most kids with epilepsy can ride their bicycles. Just be sure that you always wear a bike helmet and stay away from dangerous places. You can also do lots of other sports. You just need to be a little more careful than other kids. Some people think that kids with epilepsy shouldn't go swimming because they might have a seizure in the water and drown. But if you don't have too many seizures it should be OK for you to go swimming in a pool if an adult is watching closely. All kids need to be watched in certain activities! If your parents are worried that something you want to do is too dangerous, ask them to talk to your doctor about it. Don't do it if they tell you not to.

Should I tell my friends about my epilepsy?

Not everyone needs to know about your epilepsy. It depends on how often you have seizures and how you feel about telling your friends. If you have seizures during the time you are with your friends, they should know what's going on. Even if your seizure medicine stops all your seizures, you might find that it feels good to share information about your epilepsy with your close friends. It's really up to you.

The Human Brain

