**What is epilepsy?**
Epilepsy is a medical condition that from time to time produces sudden bursts of electrical activity in the brain. It is also called a Seizure Disorder. Seizures upset normal brain functions and can affect a person’s consciousness, bodily movements or sensations for a short time. Seizures can occur in just one area of the brain (focal or partial seizures) or may affect nerve cells throughout the brain (generalized seizures). Normal brain function cannot return until the seizure subsides.

**What is the difference between seizures and epilepsy?**
Seizures are a symptom of epilepsy. Many illnesses or severe injuries can affect the brain enough to produce a single seizure. When a person has two or more seizures, they are considered to have epilepsy.

**What causes seizures?**
Seizures are caused by conditions in the brain that may have been present since birth or they may develop later in life due to injury, infections, structural abnormalities in the brain, exposure to toxic agents, or for reasons that are still not well understood.

**Who is at risk?**
Epilepsy can affect anyone. Epilepsy is common, and one in 26 people will develop epilepsy at some point in their lives. More than 2.3 million people have epilepsy in the United States today. About 30% of the 150,000 new cases each year begin in childhood, particularly in early childhood and around the time of adolescence. There is also a high incidence of epilepsy in people over the age of 65.

**Is epilepsy common in Asian Americans?**
While the research available on Asian Americans is limited, data suggests that 1.5% of the more than 17 million Asian Americans in the United States have epilepsy, and, because of challenges collecting data, as well as fear and confusion about the condition, the number could be even higher.

**Is epilepsy ever contagious?**
No, epilepsy is never contagious. You cannot catch epilepsy from someone else and nobody can catch it from you.

**Which doctors treat epilepsy?**
Many different types of doctors can diagnose and treat epilepsy including pediatricians, neurologists and family physicians. Sometimes individuals with epilepsy need specialized care that is available in large medical centers, in neurological clinics, and through other specialists.

**How is epilepsy diagnosed?**
No single test will tell a doctor if a person has epilepsy. A doctor’s first tool in diagnosing epilepsy is a careful medical history with as much information as possible about what the seizures looked like and what happened just before they began. A test known as an electroencephalograph (EEG) is commonly used to measure the brain’s electrical patterns. An MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) or CT (computerized tomography) may also be used to provide a scan or picture of the brain to assist the doctor in determining what is causing the seizures.

**How is epilepsy treated?**
The most common treatment for epilepsy is medication. There are a number of medications that control different types of seizures. Epilepsy may also be treated with special devices such as a Vagus Nerve Stimulator (VNS), a special diet, and sometimes brain surgery.

**How can people guard against having seizures?**
A person with epilepsy can help control his or her seizures by taking the prescribed medication regularly, maintaining regular sleep cycles, avoiding unusual stress, and working closely with his or her physician. Regular medical evaluation and follow-up visits are also important. However, seizures may occur even when someone is doing everything he or she is supposed to do.

**What should I do if I think I have epilepsy?**
If you think you or a loved one might be having seizures, it is important to discuss what has been happening with your doctor. Keep a record of how often the unusual episode occurs, the time of day it happens, and what form it takes. This can help your doctor determine if what you are describing might be a symptom of epilepsy.

**Learn More**
Visit [www.epilepsy.com/info/asian_americans](http://www.epilepsy.com/info/asian_americans) or call 1-800-332-1000 to talk directly to one of our representatives who can answer your questions and help you find the nearest Epilepsy Foundation affiliate.