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New to Epilepsy and Seizures?

About Epilepsy: The Basics

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- Epilepsy is a medical condition in which someone has recurring seizures.
- A seizure is a disruption of the electrical communication between neurons (a type of brain cell) in the brain.
- Someone is said to have epilepsy if they have 1 or more seizures, they are likely to have more, and the seizures are not provoked or caused by another treatable medical condition.

What is epilepsy?

Epilepsy is a neurological condition, which means it affects the brain, the main part of the nervous system. Epilepsy may also be called a “seizure disorder.” People are usually diagnosed with epilepsy if:

- They have had at least 1 seizure.
- They are likely to have more seizures.
- The seizure wasn't provoked or caused by another treatable medical condition like an infection or diabetes.

What are seizures?

Seizures seen in epilepsy are temporary changes in behavior caused by problems with the electrical and chemical activity of the brain. Seizures may look and feel different from one person to the next. What happens during a seizure depends on the area of brain affected.

Epilepsy seizures may be caused by a number of things such as brain injury, infection, or a family (genetic) tendency. Most of the time, however, the cause is unknown.

Will I have seizures forever?

It depends. About 60% of people who develop epilepsy may get control of their seizures easily with medicine. Some may be able to come off medicine eventually. Yet about 30 to 40% of people have difficulty with seizure control and other problems related to the epilepsy.

You probably have a lot of other questions about epilepsy, too. We will help you understand the basics, answer the most common questions, and help you find resources and other information you may need. But information alone won't help you manage your epilepsy and find a way to cope with the effects on your daily life. You'll need to develop the skills to use the information and make it work for you.

Remember, the Epilepsy Foundation is your unwavering ally in the fight against epilepsy and seizures. You don't walk alone.

“Seizures are caused by disturbances in the electrical and chemical activity of the brain.”

- **65 million** people around the world have epilepsy.
- **Between 2.2 and 3 million** people in the United States have epilepsy.
- **1 in 26** people in the United States will develop epilepsy at some point.
- **Between 5 and 8 out of 1,000** people in the United States live with epilepsy at any one time.
- **150,000** people are diagnosed with epilepsy in the United States each year

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- **About 1 out of 3** people with epilepsy live with uncontrolled seizures because no available treatment works for them.
- For **6 out of 10** people with epilepsy, the cause of epilepsy is unknown.

*Authored by: **Patricia O. Shafer RN, MN on 9/2014***