

Seizures

A seizure is a sudden “*episode*” caused by an electrical problem in the brain. With a seizure, a person has change in awareness, body movements, or sensation.

Signs & Symptoms

There are many types of seizures. Common types are:

A Generalized Tonic Clonic Seizure. This is also called a grand mal seizure. A convulsion occurs with this type. Signs of a convulsion include:

- Brief loss of consciousness. Falling down.
- The arms and legs stiffen, jerk, and twitch.
- This type usually lasts 1 to 2 minutes. When it ends, the person's muscles relax. He or she may lose bladder control, be confused, have a headache, and fall asleep. This is the type most people think of with the word “seizure”.

An Absence Seizure. This is also called a petit mal seizure. A convulsion does not occur with this type. Signs of an absence seizure include:

- Blank stares. It looks like the person is daydreaming or not paying attention.
- Lip smacking. Repeated blinking, chewing or hand movements.
- This type of seizure usually lasts only a few seconds, but can occur many times a day. When the seizure ends, the person is not confused, but is not aware that the seizure occurred.
- Absence seizures are common in children and can result in learning problems.

A Fever (Febrile) Seizure. This type is brought on by a high fever in infants and small children. High fevers cause most seizures in children aged 6 months to 5 years. Signs are ones of a convulsion listed in the left column. Most febrile seizures last 1 to 2 minutes, but can last longer. Seeing a child have a febrile seizure causes alarm. In general, these seizures are harmless.

Causes

Include epilepsy (a brain disorder), infections that cause a high fever, heat stroke, and electric shock. Head injury, stroke, and toxic substances can also cause a seizure. Sometimes the cause of a seizure is not known.

Treatment

Seizure disorders are treated with medication. Other medical treatments may be needed.