

What causes epilepsy?

- Fits can be caused by high fevers due to malaria, meningitis etc. It is only if the fits become regular (e.g. daily or monthly) the person is said to have epilepsy.
- A person who has experienced a brain injury (e.g. due to a car accident) may start to have fits.
- Many cases of epilepsy are caused by problems during pregnancy or at birth. This can be infections during pregnancy, brain damage in labour or the baby not breathing soon after birth.
- Drug and alcohol abuse can cause the epilepsy.
- In most cases we do not know what caused epilepsy in the person.

Epilepsy does not mean the person is possessed by evil spirits.

What does a fit look like?

People with epilepsy have convulsions (also known as fits or seizures). Some fits are very brief, lasting only a few seconds. The person goes still and the eyes stare with no blinking.

In more serious fits the person will fall over, often with a cry, and after being stiff the whole body will shake and perhaps froth at the mouth. Sometimes the person will bite his tongue; this will make the froth bloody and can be very frightening to look at. These fits may last a few minutes. After fitting the person will be dozy and will often sleep deeply.

Can I catch epilepsy?

Epilepsy is NOT infectious. You cannot catch it from someone with epilepsy.

It is not caught by coming into contact with the froth from the mouth of a person having a fit, or from touching the person whilst they are fitting.

It is not the fault of the person and can happen to anyone.

What is the treatment for epilepsy?

- The patient should see a medical doctor or a community psychiatric nurse who will advise on treatment.
- Any medicine must be taken regularly as prescribed; even missing one dose can allow the fits to come back.
- The medicine might initially make the person drowsy but this will improve as the body adjusts.
- If the initial dose does not stop the fits, the doctor might increase the dose or change the medication.
- The dose should not be changed without consultation with the doctor or community psychiatric nurse.
- The medication should not be stopped except when advised by a doctor or nurse.

If a baby or small child has convulsions with fever the best treatment is to reduce their temperature and treat the cause of the infection.

What to do if a person has a fit

- Move the patient out of any danger (e.g. traffic, fire, water).
- Don't try to stop the jerky movements.
- Put something soft under the head of the person and loosen tight clothing.
- Don't put anything in the mouth.
- When the patient stops jerking lie him/her on the side to let froth run out of the mouth.
- Comfort the person when they wake up or after the fit.
- Give first aid to any small injuries that occurred during the fit.
- Encourage the person and their family to seek medical help to stop further fits. This is the best treatment for epilepsy.

If the fit lasts more than 10 minutes this is VERY dangerous and the person should be taken to hospital immediately

Advice to the patient and family

- The person can lead a normal life. They can go to school, work, marry and have children.
- The person must not drink alcohol or take other medication without first checking with the doctor or nurse.
- The person should not go near fire, water, machinery or drive a car until the fits are under control.

Name of specialist health worker:

Contact no.:

Address:



Caring for someone with

Epilepsy



Many people suffer from fits or convulsions (also called seizures). There are many causes of convulsions but when they become regular, the person is said to suffer from epilepsy.

Although epilepsy can take a long time to get better and sometimes can never be cured, the fits can be very effectively controlled by medicine and the patient can live a normal life.