Patient Information about Epilepsy

http://www.neurologychannel.com/patient-information-epilepsy/index.shtml

Epilepsy, or seizure disorder, is a chronic neurological condition caused by abnormal brain cell activity. Epilepsy is characterized by recurrent seizures—having one seizure does not necessarily mean that a person has epilepsy.

Idiopathic epilepsy has no known cause, and the person has not been diagnosed with other neurological or mental disorders. Symptomatic epilepsy is associated with another condition, such as stroke, head injury, and cerebral palsy. Seizure disorder affects more than 2 million people in the United States and often is diagnosed during childhood.

Here are some questions to ask your doctor, neurologist, or pediatric neurologist about epilepsy. **Print this page**, mark the questions you would like to have answered, and bring it with you to your next appointment. The more you know about epilepsy, the easier it will be to make informed medical decisions and manage seizures.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor about Epilepsy

- ☐ Why do you suspect that I or my child, or family member has epilepsy? What type of epilepsy do you suspect?
- ☐ What do you think is the cause for these recurrent seizures?
- ☐ What triggers do you suspect are causing the seizures?
- ☐ What are the early warning signs that might indicate that a seizure is beginning?
- ☐ Are all seizures alike? If not, what are the differences?
- ☐ What are absence seizures?
- ☐ How likely is it that a loss of consciousness will occur during a seizure?
- ☐ What should I do if my child has a seizure? What should other family members or bystanders do if I have a seizure?
- ☐ Is there some way to alert strangers to my or my family member's epilepsy?
- ☐ What are the complications resulting from having several seizures?

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- ☐ How can the risk for these complications be reduced?
- ☐ Is there a cure for this type of epilepsy?
- ☐ What is the usual prognosis for people with this form of seizure disorder?
- ☐ How will a diagnosis be made?
- ☐ Will an EEG and other types of exams or tests be performed to help diagnose seizure disorder? If so, what preparation is needed for these tests?
- ☐ Are other family members at increased risk for epilepsy? If so, should they be examined and/or tested for seizure disorder?
- ☐ What are the available epilepsy treatments?
- ☐ What type of treatment do you recommend? Why do you recommend this epilepsy treatment?
- ☐ What is a ketogenic diet? Might my child benefit from this diet? Why or why not?
- ☐ How likely is it that my or my family member's condition can be successfully treated with seizure medications?
- ☐ What side effects are related to epilepsy medicines?
- ☐ What should I do if severe side effects develop? **Telephone number to call:**
- ☐ How long do you think treatment will be necessary?
- ☐ If medications prove ineffective, what other treatment options are available?
- ☐ Might surgery be an option? Why or why not?
- ☐ Can you outline the different surgical procedures available and their effectiveness?
- ☐ What type of epilepsy surgery do you recommend?

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- ☐ What are the benefits, risks, and possible complications of this surgery?
- ☐ How likely is it that my child will outgrow his or her epilepsy?
- ☐ Can you recommend any resources for support or further information about epilepsy, such as the Epilepsy Foundation?
- ☐ Do you recommend that I or my family member participate in a clinical trial for patients who have seizure disorders? Why or why not?
- ☐ **Next appointment**:
  Doctor: Date: Time:

Notes/Additional Information

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