Epilepsy- General Information

Epilepsy is a chronic disorder of the central nervous system. It is often characterized by seizures and is the fourth most common neurological disorder and affects people of all ages.

A person is considered to have epilepsy if they meet any of the following conditions:

1. At least two unprovoked seizures occurring greater than 24 hours apart.
2. One unprovoked seizure and after two unprovoked seizures occurring over the next 10 years.
3. Diagnosis of an epilepsy syndrome.

Seizures

A seizure is caused by a burst of abnormal activity in the brain. With a seizure, a person has change in awareness, behavior, body movement or sensation. A seizure can last from a few seconds to a few minutes. Seizures can take on many different forms and affect people in different ways.

Auras

Auras are often describes as a warning before the occurrence of a seizure. Not everyone experiences an aura. Some have described it as a change in feeling, sensation, thought or behaviors. this may include:

- An overpowering smell.
- Nausea or indigestion.
- A rising/sinking feeling in the stomach.
- a sleepy/dreamy feeling.

Types of Seizures

**Generalized Tonic Clonic Seizures.** Involves the entire brain. May also be referred to as a grand mal seizure. This occurs when abnormal electrical activity affects all or most of the brain. often the body will stiffen and then the person will lose consciousness and then the body will shake due to uncontrollable muscle contractions.

**Absence Seizure** – A brief loss of consciousness or awareness. It generally last only seconds and mainly occurs in children. Signs may include a blank stare, lip smacking and repeated blinking, chewing or hand movement.
**Focal Seizures**—The burst of electrical activity is contain in one part of the brain. In a simple focal seizure, you may have muscular jerks or strange sensations in one arm or leg. The person does not lose consciousness or awareness.

**Causes**

- brain trauma
- genetics
- stroke
- tumors
- brain infections
- head injury

**Risk Factors**

- Babies who are born small for their age
- Babies who have seizures in the first month of life
- Cerebral Palsy
- Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Conditions with intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Family history of epilepsy (febrile)

**Triggering Factors**

- Stress or anxiety
- Lack of sleep or tiredness
- Skipping meals
- Alcohol intake
- Flickering lights
- Fever
- Caffeine

**Diagnosis**

- EEG (electroencephalogram)
- Blood tests
- Cat scan
- Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI)
- Lumbar puncture (spinal tap)

**Treatment**

- Drug Therapy
- Surgery
- Ketogenic therapy
The following websites offer additional information on epilepsy including causes, symptoms, treatment, and diagnosis:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Epilepsy Foundation
Mayo Clinic
Medical News Today
Medlineplus
National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke
WebMD
Wikipedia

None of the information provided is meant to treat or diagnose any conditions. Not is it a substitute for medical, or psychological diagnosis and treatment.