

Epilepsy

What is Epilepsy?

Epilepsy Action (2021) explains that epilepsy is a condition that affects the brain, for a child it is different as the brain is immature and developing rapidly (Young Epilepsy, 2015). When someone has epilepsy, it means they tend to have epileptic seizures. Epilepsy can start at any age and there are 40 types of epilepsy. Some types last for a limited time and the individual will eventually stop having seizures, but for others epilepsy is a condition they'll have for a lifetime. EpilepsyAction (2019) explains what epilepsy is in the early years. The seizures are caused by a sudden burst of excess electrical activity in the brain, causing a temporary disruption in the normal message passing between brain cells. This disruption means that the brain's messages become halted or mixed up. The brain is responsible for all the functions of the body, what a child experiences during a seizure depends on where in the brain the epileptic activity begins and how widely and rapidly it spreads. Because of this, there are many different types of seizures, and each child will experience epilepsy in a way that is unique to them.

What are the signs of epilepsy in the early years?

Sometimes it is hard to see the signs of epilepsy, Better Health Channel (2020) explains that depending on the seizure type, seizures are not always recognised in children when they first occur. Some seizures can be unnoticeable as they are very brief, this is when a child has brief episodes of loss of awareness and responsiveness. However, Young Epilepsy (2015) says depending on the location of the burst of activity the seizures will present differently. Seizures can cause a child's limbs to twitch, their muscles become very stiff, or floppy and they can lose consciousness and fall to the floor and shake. They may also experience strange sensations, such as a weird smell or taste or they may stop what they were doing and stare for a few seconds. Epilepsy Foundation (2014) pinpoint what the signs are before/after a seizure, such as; short attention blackouts, sudden falls, stomach pain followed by confusion and sleepiness, smell or weird taste, repeated fear or anger, clusters of movements.

How many people have epilepsy?

The World Health Organization (2022) says that 50 million people worldwide have epilepsy.

Young Epilepsy (2022) says that there are 600,000 people in the UK with epilepsy which is 1 in 103 people.

Action Medical Research (2021) says that there are over 78,000 babies, children, and teenagers under 18 years of age that suffer from Epilepsy in the UK.

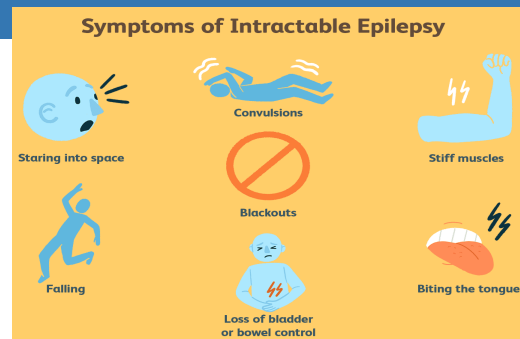
How is Epilepsy diagnosed?

EpilepsySociety, (2021) tells us that a diagnosis of epilepsy for children may be considered if they've had more than one seizure. The GP will usually refer them to a paediatrician for further investigation. The parent/guardian and child may be asked to describe in detail what happened before, during and after the seizure. The paediatrician could also suggest a couple of tests to help with the diagnosis. The tests alone cannot confirm or deny epilepsy, but the information can help to find out why the child is having seizures. The NHS (2016) explains whilst diagnosing a child, doctors will suggest tests to exclude other possible causes, as example a blood sugar test to rule out low blood sugar levels. Another test that could be suggested is an electroencephalogram to measure the electrical activity in the brain and is usually done to identify the type of epilepsy. The child could also be sent for a brain scan to identify if a structural brain abnormality may be the case. Medical News Today (2019) explains that identifying a seizure depends on many factors, which are the age of the child and the type of epilepsy or seizure they experience.

What are the benefits of diagnosing epilepsy?

By identifying and diagnosing epilepsy and the seizure type it can help individuals to know how to manage the illness in their day-to-day life, it is also a good opportunity to find an effective treatment says Mayo Clinic (2022).

When a person is diagnosed with epilepsy John Hopkins Medicine (2022) tells us that it is typically managed well through medication and other treatments, without a diagnosis these medications and treatments wouldn't be available. Great Ormond Street Hospital For Children (2016) explains that after a child has been diagnosed with epilepsy the majority of them can lead full and active lives, they will be controlled on medication or can grow out of it. This depends on the type of epilepsy the child has. Most children, even the ones that don't outgrow epilepsy can go to mainstream schools and participate in most sports. The doctor will advise the necessary precautions that the child should take and advise what activities need to be avoided.



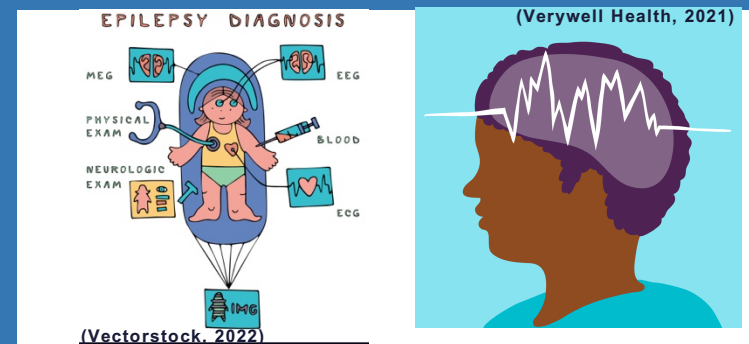
(VeryWell, 2021)

A Support Strategy to support epilepsy?

A support strategy that supports epilepsy is medication, Epilepsy Foundation (2019) states that medicine is a common way of treating epilepsy and is always the first option of treatment. There are various medications that are in place to prevent or stop seizures which are called anti-seizure medications, anti-epileptic drugs, or anti-seizure drugs. These can manage seizures for about 7 out of 10 people. Some medications will work better for certain types of seizures more than other types. If a medication fails, another one may work better, a combination of medication can be tried as well. The positive thing about medication is that 75% of young children that use one or more different types of medication can manage their epilepsy, which will help them to have a full filled life says Mc Brien, D (2022).

The negatives of medication for epilepsy is the side effects it causes. Melinosky, C (2021) explains that the medication taken for epilepsy can have side effects which are, grogginess, double vision, dizziness, nausea, unsteadiness, and a rash.

Healthy Children (2020) explain that it is important for children to take their medication when instructed, otherwise it could result in a seizure. Another negative is that medication will not work for every individual.



What are the disadvantages of diagnosing epilepsy?

UpToDate (2022) explains that after a child has been diagnosed with epilepsy they are more at risk to psychological, behavioural, neurological, academic, and social issues, this can have a significant impact on the quality of life the child has due to the seizures. However Great Ormond Street Hospital (2016) disagrees and explains that a child can lead a full and active life after being diagnosed. Mass General for children (2022) states that mental health and behaviour issues are two of the main issues that can affect children with epilepsy. Anxiety and mood disorders are common with children with epilepsy. If you have epilepsy, you are more likely to have mental health and behavioural issues with a percentage of 30-50 compared to the 8.5% that don't have epilepsy. Mass General for children (2022) explains that depression is the most common mood disorder associated with epilepsy however it can go unnoticed and untreated especially in children.

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