

Epilepsy in children

Epilepsy — a disorder of the brain associated with sudden and unpredictable seizures — is the most common chronic neurological condition among children in the U.S.

Seizures can be prevented and controlled with anti-seizure drugs, special diets or surgery.

Understanding seizures

There are many different types of epilepsy, each with different seizure types and underlying causes that can vary widely from child to child.

Symptoms can range from **unresponsiveness**, **staring** and **brief loss of awareness** to **full-body shaking**, **twitching** and **stiffening**.

In general, seizures themselves do not cause permanent physical or cognitive consequences. Any long-term issues are usually associated with the underlying cause of epilepsy, such as genetic or brain abnormalities.

Diagnosing epilepsy

An epilepsy diagnosis typically means:

- Two or more unprovoked seizures
- Seizures that occurred unpredictably and not immediately after a traumatic event such as a head injury or stroke

If your child experiences a seizure:

- Place them on their side.
- Do not try to stop their movements.
- Never place anything in their mouth.
- Contact your pediatrician immediately.
- Your doctor may refer you to a pediatric neurologist to conduct a neurological history and EEG test.



Epilepsy affects more than **470,000** children and adolescents under the age of **18**

Causes

The main causes of epilepsy in children are:

Genetic conditions

(juvenile myoclonic epilepsy, Dravet syndrome, tuberous sclerosis, Down syndrome)

Brain injury

(trauma, infection, extended lack of oxygen to the brain)

Brain abnormalities

(focal cortical dysplasia, hemimegalencephaly)

In some cases, a clear cause may be unknown.

Breaking down the stigma

Seizures can be frightening events for people, particularly those who are unfamiliar with the condition. Families affected by epilepsy face significant stigma, but parents and advocates can help create a more informed and understanding environment for children with epilepsy. If you come across someone with epilepsy, or your child has a classmate with epilepsy, please show them compassion.

