

Tests For Epilepsy

Currently, there is no one test available which can say if someone does or does not have epilepsy. If your doctor suspects epilepsy, he/she will refer you to a doctor who specialises in brain disorders. This specialist will ask you to go through a few tests (EEG, CT, MRI) in order to find out whether you have epilepsy and identify what type it is.

- **EEG** stands for Electroencephalogram. This test involves placing around 20 pads on your head while you sit or lie down. These pick up the electrical activity of your brain cells and transmits it to an instrument which produces a print-out of your brain waves. The test is performed while you open and close your eyes, taking deep breaths and during exposure to flashing lights. The whole thing usually takes about an hour.
- **CT** stands for Computer Tomography. This test involves you lying on a mobile couch which slides your head into the scanner, which looks like the drum of a washing machine. X-rays are taken of the brain at different angles and passed through a computer to produce a picture of 'slices' of your brain. This is done to look for areas of damage to the brain that could account for the seizures.
- **MRI** stands for Magnetic Resonance Imaging . This provides a high-quality image of your brain without using x-rays or other radiation. The drum-like scanner contains a powerful magnet that picks up signals from your brain. These are fed into a computer which created 3-D image of the area being scanned and displays it on a screen.

If you have any concerns about Epilepsy, please feel free to see a psychologist at EMU-PDRAM. If you need more detailed information about the illness, the psychologist can also direct you to the right addresses.

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What is Epilepsy?



EPILEPSY



Who has Epilepsy?

Test for Epilepsy



What is Epilepsy?

People with epilepsy are just like everybody else, except they sometimes have seizures. A seizure is caused by a sudden burst of excess electrical activity in the brain, causing a temporary disruption in the normal message passing between brain cells. The person may appear to behave differently (loss of consciousness, irregular breathing and movements etc...), however he/she will not remember anything about the seizure. Seizures can happen at any time and they generally only last a matter of seconds or minutes, after which the brain usually returns to normal.

Who has Epilepsy?

Epilepsy can affect any of us, at any age and from any walk of life. Sometimes the reason epilepsy develops is obvious: brain damage caused by a difficult birth; a severe blow to the head or an infection of the brain such as meningitis. Sometimes the tendency to have seizures runs in the family.

Types of seizures

The main thing to bear in mind is that seizures can be of two types: Generalised or Partial.

- ❖ Generalized seizures involve the whole brain. There are several types, including – tonic-clonic, absence and myoclonic.
- ❖ Partial seizures, as the name suggests, start in just one part of the brain. They can be either simple partial seizures or complex partial seizures but either way the electrical discharge may stay in one spot or may spread to the rest of the brain.



Possible Causes of Epilepsy

Most seizures strike unexpectedly. However some of us can pinpoint certain factors which spark them off. These include:

- ❖ **Stress** – some of us experience more seizures during periods of anxiety or stress. This may be partly because sleep patterns can be upset at such times. Some stress is part of everyday life.
- ❖ **Patterns of light** – some people say that watching TV or spending a lot of time on the computers and playing video games can trigger seizures.
- ❖ **Late nights and lack of sleep** – too many late nights or going without sleep can trigger seizures. The odd late night shouldn't matter much, but it is best to keep regular hours.
- ❖ **Food** – skipping meals and having an unbalanced diet may be a factor.
- ❖ **Alcohol** – excess alcohol can trigger a seizure – even in people without epilepsy.
- ❖ **Illegal drugs** – taking illegal drugs or smoking illegal substances are common triggers of seizures, they can provoke seizures in people who do not have epilepsy. Each person with or without epilepsy will have to decide for themselves whether they wish to take the risks involved.

Medical Treatment of Epilepsy

Once you have been diagnosed as having epilepsy, the carefully planned use of drugs will be designed by your doctor in order to control your seizures. It is vital to take your medicine correctly as prescribed by the doctor.



CAUTION

- **Anti-epileptic medication work by establishing a constant balance of the medication in your system—missing doses or taking the medication at irregular times may prevent the medication having a positive effect on your seizures.**
- **Stopping your medication suddenly could cause uncontrolled seizures, so it's vital to do it under your doctor's supervision.**