

Myoclonus is the term used to describe the sudden, involuntary jerking of a muscle or group of muscles caused by muscle contractions (positive myoclonus) or muscle relaxation (negative myoclonus). The twitching or jerking of muscles cannot be controlled by the person experiencing it. Myoclonic jerks may occur infrequently or many times a minute. They sometimes occur in response to an external event or when a person attempts to make a movement. By itself, myoclonus may be seen as a symptom rather than a disease. To some degree, it may occur occasionally to otherwise healthy people. (For instance, hiccups may be considered a type of myoclonus.) In severe cases, it can interfere with movement control and balance, and limit various everyday activities such as eating or talking. Myoclonus affects males and females in equal numbers. Some forms of myoclonus are common and some forms are rare. In general, the incidence of myoclonus is 1.3 cases per 100,000 person-years, and the prevalence is 8.6 cases per 100,000 populations.