**Epileptic Seizures in Infants and Children**

**What is Epilepsy?**

Epilepsy is a condition of the brain that makes children more at risk to having seizures. Seizures are caused by sudden abnormal activity in the brain. A seizure can cause short-term loss in a child’s awareness, movement, sensation or behavior. A seizure can last from 30 seconds to 2 minutes.

There are two (2) different types of epileptic seizures: focal and generalized.

* **Focal seizures** happen when nerve cells in a part of the brain are involved.
* **Generalized seizures** happen when nerve cells in both sides of the brain are involved at the same time.

**What causes Epilepsy?**

Epilepsy can be caused by:

* Brain trauma
* Head injury
* Genetic defects
* Chemical imbalances in the brain
* Sometimes the cause of an epileptic seizure is not known

**What are the symptoms?**

**A seizure can affect all of your child’s body, or only part of their body. The main symptoms of a seizure include:**

* Staring
* Muscle spasms, twitching, jerking movement or stiffening of the body
  + on one side of the body in focal seizures
  + on both sides of the body in generalized seizures
* Not responding to noise or words for short period of time
* Drooling
* Lip smacking
* Fast eye blinking
* Grunting sounds
* Loss of bowel and bladder control
* Feeling sleepy and confused after waking up from a seizure

Children with epilepsy are more likely to have a seizure when they are ill, if they are very tired or not eating well.

**How is it diagnosed?**

The doctor will do a physical exam of your child. They will ask you to describe how the seizure looked, how long it lasted, and how often your child has seizures. The doctor will order tests to help find the cause of your child’s seizure. Some of the tests the doctor may order are:

* Blood tests
* Imaging tests (CT, MRI)
* A test to record the electrical activity in your child’s brain (EEG)

**How is it treated?**

Treatment will depend on the cause of the seizure. Sometimes, no treatment is required.

Other times, medicine may be given to help prevent having a seizure in the future.

**How is it prevented?**

Prevention of a seizure will depend on the cause. Medicine can help, but some children may still have seizures. If the doctor gives your child medicine, it is important that you give your child the medicine as instructed.

If your child has a seizure, there are things you can do to keep your child safe. The main goal is to protect your child from injury.

**When your child has a seizure**:

* Stay calm
* Lower your child to the ground to prevent a fall
* Remove any furniture or sharp objects from the area
* Protect your child’s head
* Loosen tight clothing, and clothing around their neck
* Turn your child on their side. If your child vomits, turning them on their side will help keep the airway clear)
* Stay with your child until the seizure stops
* Do not hold your child down. (Holding them down will not stop the seizure)
* Do not put anything in your child’s mouth during a seizure

**Call Emergency Services (999) if:**

* The seizure lasts more than 5 minutes
* The seizure causes any problems with breathing or your child’s color changes
* Your child chokes on secretions (blood, vomit, etc.)
* Your child injured their head during the seizure
* Your child has two seizures in a row, without much time between them
* Your child has a seizure and does not wake up after the seizure stops
* Your child has a seizure and is very confused after
* Your child has a headache, a stiff neck or a rash after the seizure

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