

Recognizing Epilepsy's Causes and Symptoms

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DESCRIPTION

Epilepsy is a chronic neurological disorder characterized by recurrent, unprovoked seizures. These seizures result from abnormal electrical activity in the brain, which can cause a wide range of symptoms, from temporary confusion and staring spells to uncontrollable jerking movements and loss of consciousness. Epilepsy affects people of all ages, genders, and backgrounds, with around 50 million people globally living with the condition, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Despite its prevalence, epilepsy remains a misunderstood disorder, often surrounded by stigma. Understanding its causes, symptoms, and treatment options is essential to better manage the condition and improve the quality of life for those affected.

Epilepsy

The cause of epilepsy is not always clear, but it can be linked to various factors, including genetic, structural, and environmental triggers. In many cases, epilepsy develops without a known cause, referred to as "idiopathic epilepsy."

Genetic factors: Some forms of epilepsy have a genetic component, meaning they can be inherited from parents. These types of epilepsy may be caused by mutations in specific genes that affect how brain cells communicate or regulate electrical activity. Genetic testing may be used to identify certain inherited forms of epilepsy, although these are not always conclusive.

Brain injury: A traumatic brain injury, such as one resulting from a car accident, a fall, or a sports-related injury, can lead to epilepsy. Injuries that cause damage to the brain, especially those affecting the frontal and temporal lobes, increase the risk of seizures later in life.

Stroke: Strokes, which occur when blood flow to the brain is blocked or reduced, can damage brain tissue and trigger seizures. In fact, stroke is a leading cause of epilepsy in older adults, particularly those over the age of 65.

Infections: Infections such as meningitis, encephalitis, or brain abscesses can cause inflammation and damage to brain tissue,

potentially leading to seizures. Childhood infections like febrile seizures (seizures caused by high fever) are also risk factors.

Developmental disorders: Epilepsy can also be associated with developmental conditions such as autism spectrum disorder and neurodevelopmental delays. These conditions may predispose individuals to seizures due to abnormalities in brain development.

Symptoms of epilepsy

The hallmark symptom of epilepsy is recurrent seizures, but the type and severity of seizures can vary widely among individuals. The primary categories of seizures include focal seizures (which originate in one specific area of the brain) and generalized seizures (which involve both hemispheres of the brain). Some common symptoms include:

Loss of awareness: During certain types of seizures, such as absence seizures (formerly called petit mal seizures), individuals may stare blankly and lose awareness of their surroundings for a few seconds.

Uncontrollable movements: In generalized tonic-clonic seizures (formerly called grand mal seizures), a person may experience violent muscle contractions, stiffening of the body, and jerking movements, often accompanied by a loss of consciousness.

Sensory disturbances: Focal seizures can cause strange sensations like tingling, flashes of light, or sudden emotional changes.

Temporary confusion or memory loss: After a seizure, individuals may experience confusion, disorientation, or an inability to recall what happened during the episode.

Automatisms: Some seizures may lead to repetitive movements, such as lip-smacking or hand-rolling, which the individual may not be aware of.

CONCLUSION

Epilepsy is a complex neurological disorder that affects millions of people worldwide. While it can significantly impact an

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individual's life, effective treatments are available to manage seizures and improve overall well-being. With proper diagnosis, treatment, and lifestyle modifications, many people with epilepsy

can lead fulfilling lives. Reducing stigma, raising awareness, and improving access to treatment remain critical in supporting those affected by epilepsy.