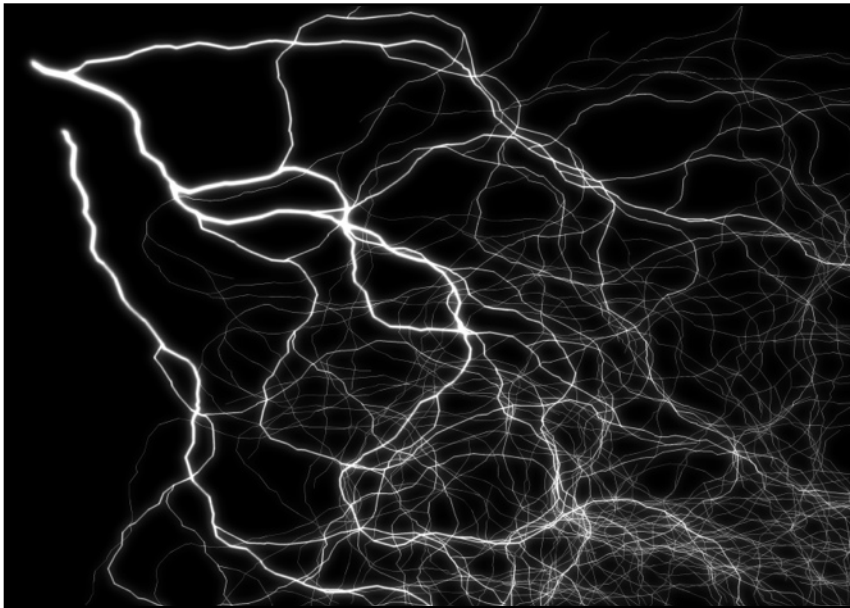


Neurology for You

Seizures

A manageable chronic disease



Seizures are common: about 1 in 10 Americans will have at least one seizure during their lifetime. Seizures occur when an abnormal electrical signal in the brain propagates and causes part of the brain to malfunction. These events are usually short (lasting seconds to minutes) and often have an external symptom, such as stiffening of the body, shaking of one or more limbs, and loss of consciousness. Some seizures may be more subtle with staring, an interruption in speech, or an odd

change in behavior. These may occur as single episodes, or they may cluster. Having one seizure does not mean that you will have another seizure, but consultation with a Neurologist may be useful to determine the risk of recurrence and help determine if medications are needed to help prevent further seizures. Seizures are usually not lethal, but they may predispose you to injury with loss of consciousness. Furthermore, continuous seizures may result in injury to the brain.

How to Manage Seizures

- Identify your triggers and avoid them. Typical triggers include sleep deprivation, minor infections, and not taking your antiseizure medications as prescribed. Some people are sensitive to flashing lights. Excess alcohol consumption can also increase the risk of having a seizure.
- If you are prescribed an antiseizure medication, take this on the schedule determined by your physician. Missing doses increases the risk of seizures.
- Some medications increase the risk of seizures and others may have adverse interactions with antiseizure medications. If you are prescribed a new medication, ask the physician to check for these potential problems.
- If you develop any new symptoms with your seizures, discuss this with your Neurologist.

HOW DO YOU PROTECT YOURSELF FROM SEIZURES?

Besides avoidance of triggers and taking prevention medications (if prescribed), the most important method of protecting yourself from seizures is *avoidance of situations where you might be injured if you suddenly lose consciousness*. Seizures may occur suddenly and without warning. Accordingly, it is important to avoid potentially dangerous situations such as climbing to heights (e.g. performing roof maintenance), swimming unattended, locking the bathroom door in your home, and other situations where

others may not be able to reach you if you lose consciousness. Additionally, in many states it is against the law to operate a motor vehicle within a certain period after your last seizure with loss of consciousness (check with your state government).

It is useful for loved ones, roommates, and friends to be aware of your seizure disorder in order to help expedite your medical care if you experience one.