

Healthcare Lingo

Absence seizure

Causes a sudden, short period of “blinking out,” usually for 10 to 20 seconds. The person may just stare into space.¹

Atonic seizure

Causes a sudden loss of muscle tone, usually for less than 15 seconds. The person may drop things or fall. Atonic seizures are also called drop attacks or drop seizures.²

Clonic seizure

Causes muscles to go back and forth between contracting and relaxing, usually for a few seconds to 1 minute. The person may make jerky movements with their arms or legs.³

Comorbid disorders

Medical conditions that might accompany epilepsy. Some of these conditions affect your brain and are caused by seizures or related to your epilepsy. Other types of comorbid conditions are not related to seizures or your epilepsy.⁴

CT scan

A CT scan uses radiation to see if there are changes in the brain, such as bleeding, that might be causing the seizures. CT scans are also called CAT scans. CT stands for computerized tomography.⁵

Diagnosis

The identification of a medical condition, such as epilepsy, by a doctor, nurse practitioner, or physician’s assistant.⁵

EEG test

An EEG (electroencephalogram) records electrical activity in the brain. EEGs can help the doctor understand what’s happening in the brain.⁵

EEG, CT, MRI technologists

The healthcare professionals who perform these tests.⁴

Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a brain disorder that involves seizures.⁶

Epileptologist

A neurologist who has extra training in epilepsy.⁴

Focal seizures

Focal (partial) seizures start in a group of neurons in a specific part of the brain.⁴

Frontal lobe

The part of your brain at the front of your head (above your eyes) that controls thinking, voluntary muscle movements, and some sensations.⁷⁻⁹

Generalized seizures

Generalized seizures start in a network of neurons spread across the brain.⁴

MRI scan

MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) uses magnetic fields to see if there are structural changes in the brain, such as tumors, that might be causing the seizures.⁵

Myoclonic seizure

A seizure that causes brief, shock-like jerks that last 1 or 2 seconds. The person usually has muscle jerks on both sides of the body at the same time.¹⁰

Neurologist

A doctor trained in brain disorders, including epilepsy.⁴



Healthcare Lingo (cont)

Neuron

A nerve cell. Nerve cells communicate with each other in the brain and can send messages to other parts of the body.¹¹

Nurse

A healthcare professional who may work with you and your doctor to help manage your epilepsy.⁴

Occipital lobe

The part of your brain at the back of your head that controls vision.^{7,12}

Occupational therapist

A healthcare professional who may help you learn new ways of doing things in your daily life.⁴

Parietal lobe

The part of your brain behind your frontal lobe (in the middle of the head) that processes information about temperature, taste, touch, and movement.^{7,13}

Pharmacist

A healthcare professional who may help you manage your epilepsy medications and any other medications you may be taking.⁴

Physical therapist

A healthcare professional who may help you improve your muscle strength or balance.⁴

Primary care provider

A family doctor, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant who may be the first healthcare professional you see after you have a seizure. A PCP may refer you to a specialist, such as a neurologist or an epileptologist, to diagnose and treat your epilepsy.⁴

Psychologist

A mental health counselor who may help you manage how epilepsy affects your life.⁴

Seizure

Seizures are strong bursts of electrical activity in the brain.^{11,14}

Temporal lobe

The part of your brain on the side of your head (over your ears) that controls hearing. This part of your brain also combines memories with sound, sight, touch, and taste.^{7,15}

Tonic seizure

A seizure that causes muscles on both sides of the body to contract strongly and become intensely stiff, usually for less than 20 seconds. The person may fall if standing when the seizure starts.¹⁶

Tonic-clonic seizure

A seizure that has 2 parts. First, during the tonic part, the muscles of the body contract strongly and may cause the person to fall. Then, during the clonic part, arms and legs jerk in a repeated pattern. A tonic-clonic seizure may last from 1 to 3 minutes.¹⁷



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