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## A Look at Epilepsy

Most people know little about epilepsy, even though it's the nation's fourth most common neurological disorder. Epilepsy is marked by repeated, unpredictable seizures which may last for seconds or minutes.

Types of seizures can also vary widely, which is why epilepsy is sometimes called a "spectrum disorder." Seizures may appear only occasionally. At the other end of the spectrum, a person may have hundreds of seizures a day.

Such subtle seizures can cause feelings of déjà vu (a feeling something has happened before), hallucinations (seeing, smelling, or hearing things which aren't there); or other seemingly mild symptoms. "These little spells or seizures can sometimes occur for years before they're recognized as a problem and diagnosed as epilepsy," says Dr. Jacqueline French, who specializes in epilepsy treatment at the New York University Langone Medical Center.

You can take steps to reduce some risk factors for epilepsy.

Prevent head injuries by wearing seatbelts and bicycle helmets, and make sure kids are properly secured in car seats. Get proper treatment for disorders which can affect the brain as you age, such as cardiovascular disease or high blood pressure. During pregnancy, good prenatal care can help prevent brain problems in the developing fetus which could lead to epilepsy and other problems later in life.



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