A simple guide for patients and families

Epilepsy (Fits)



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Scan to book your appointment

Conditions treated at our clinic

- Epilepsy and seizures (fits)
- Stroke and paralysis
- Migraine and frequent headache
- Vertigo, giddiness, loss of balance
- Parkinson's disease, tremor, slowness
- Memory loss, dementia
- Neck and back pain, sciatica, spondylosis
- Numbness, tingling, nerve pain (neuropathy)
- Muscle weakness (myopathy)
- Head injury after an accident
- Sleep problems
- Children: seizures, developmental delay, slow walking or talking

Tests at Narayani Hospital, under one roof

EEG · Video EEG · EMG / NCS · VEP · BERA · VNG (vertigo test) · CT brain · CSF test · All blood tests

Not everyone needs tests. When they are needed, Dr Diwan explains which ones and why.

What is epilepsy?

Brain cells talk to each other using tiny electrical signals. A **seizure (fit)** is a sudden burst of abnormal electrical activity in the brain. For a short time it changes movement, awareness, feelings or behaviour.

Epilepsy means a tendency to have repeated seizures. It is a disorder of the brain — a physical illness, not a mental illness.



- About **1 in 100** people have epilepsy — over 1 crore in India.
- It can start at any age.
- **About 7 in 10** people become seizure-free with the right medicine.

What causes it?

In many people no cause is found, or it is genetic. Known causes include:

- Brain injury at birth (lack of oxygen) or developmental problems of the brain
- Head injury in an accident
- Stroke and bleeding in the brain
- Brain infections — meningitis, encephalitis, and **tapeworm cysts** (neurocysticercosis), very common in India
- Brain tumour; dementia in older people

Prevent tapeworm cysts

Wash vegetables and fruit well, drink safe water, wash hands with soap before eating and after the toilet.

A single fit with high fever in a young child (febrile seizure), very low sugar, or alcohol withdrawal is usually **not** epilepsy — but always see a doctor.

Types of seizures

Generalised seizures start in both sides of the brain at once:

Tonic-clonic	Sudden loss of consciousness, body stiffens, then jerks. Tongue bite, passing urine; confused and sleepy afterwards.
Absence	Blank stare for a few seconds, many times a day, mostly in children. Often missed; affects studies.
Myoclonic	Sudden brief jerks of arms, often in the morning; things fall from the hand.
Atonic (drop)	Sudden loss of muscle power; the person falls and may get injured.

After a big fit

It is normal to feel confused, sleepy, with headache and body ache for a few hours. Let the person rest. Write down what happened for your doctor.

Focal seizures

These start in one part of the brain. The person may stay aware or be partly aware. They may spread to become a tonic-clonic seizure.

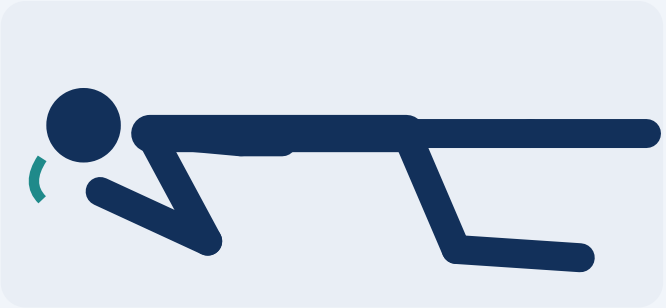
- Jerking of one arm, leg or one side of the face
- Tingling or numbness in one part of the body
- Seeing, hearing or smelling things that are not there
- Sudden fear, a rising feeling in the stomach, "déjà vu"
- Staring with lip-smacking, chewing or fumbling hands
- Fast heartbeat, sweating, breathing changes

Things that can look like fits

Fainting, low sugar, migraine, sleep disorders and stress-related (dissociative) attacks. Treatment is different, so the correct diagnosis matters.

First aid during a fit

1. Stay calm. **Note the time** the fit starts.
2. Move away sharp or hot objects. Do not move the person unless in danger.
3. Put something soft under the head; loosen tight clothes around the neck.
4. When jerking stops, **turn the person on to their side** so saliva can drain out.
5. Stay until fully awake; speak calmly and reassure.



Recovery position
On the side, top knee bent, head tilted so the mouth points down

Never do this



Nothing in the mouth — no spoon, finger or cloth



No key or iron object in the hand



No shoe or onion to smell



Do not hold the person down



No water, food or tablets until fully awake



Do not crowd around

Call 108 / go to hospital if

- The fit lasts **more than 5 minutes**
- Another fit comes before waking up
- It is the first-ever fit
- Injury, fit in water, pregnancy, diabetes, or breathing difficulty

Your doctor may give a **rescue medicine** (nose or cheek spray) for long fits — ask about it.

How is epilepsy diagnosed?

What the witness saw

The most important clue. Bring the person who saw the fit to the visit.

Phone video

If safe, record the fit on a mobile phone. It helps greatly.

EEG and video EEG

Records the brain's electrical activity, at Narayani Hospital. A normal EEG does not rule out epilepsy.

MRI brain and blood tests

To look for a cause.

Before your EEG

- Wash hair the night before or that morning; **no oil**
- Take your usual medicines; eat normally
- Sleep less the night before, if the doctor asks

Treatment with medicines

Anti-seizure medicines calm the brain's electrical activity. The doctor chooses the medicine according to:

- Type of fit, age, and whether you are a woman who may become pregnant
- Other illnesses and other medicines you take

Common medicines include levetiracetam, valproate, carbamazepine, oxcarbazepine, lamotrigine, lacosamide, clobazam and phenytoin. The dose is started low and increased slowly; usually taken 2 times a day.

If fits continue despite medicines

About 1 in 3 people have **difficult-to-control epilepsy**. Video EEG monitoring can find where fits start. Options include **epilepsy surgery** (which can cure some), nerve stimulation devices and special diets, especially for children.

Rules for medicines

- Take them **every day at the same time**. Use a mobile alarm and a pill box.
- **Never stop suddenly** — it can cause continuous, life-threatening fits.
- Missed a dose? Take it when you remember. If the next dose is near, skip it — do not take double.
- Do not run out; keep extra when travelling. Try to stay on the **same brand**.
- Continue during fever, illness and fasting.
- Tell every doctor you take them before any new medicine.

Side effects — tell your doctor

Common: sleepiness, dizziness, tiredness, irritability, weight change, hair loss. **Urgent**: skin rash with fever or mouth ulcers, yellow eyes, unusual bruising, very low mood or thoughts of self-harm.

After 2–3 fit-free years, the doctor may slowly reduce medicines in some people. Never do this yourself.

Women and epilepsy

Most women with epilepsy marry, have healthy babies and breastfeed. Planning makes it safer.



Plan pregnancy with your neurologist
Medicines may be changed months before trying.



Folic acid
Take daily, as advised, from before pregnancy.



Valproate
Can harm the unborn baby. Girls and women who can become pregnant should take it only if the neurologist decides there is no better choice.



Contraceptive pills
Some fit medicines make them fail — ask for the right method.

Found you are pregnant? **Do not stop your medicines** — see your neurologist immediately.

Living well and safely



Never swim alone



Shower or sit to bathe; don't lock the bathroom



Care near fire and stoves; use back burners



Avoid heights, ladders, terraces without railings



Sleep 7–9 hours; avoid late nights



Avoid alcohol; tea/coffee in moderation

- Exercise, sports, studies and work are encouraged — with sensible care.
- Wear a helmet on a cycle or two-wheeler (as a passenger).
- Tell teachers and close colleagues what to do during a fit.

Driving

Epilepsy must be declared when applying for a driving licence in India. **Do not drive** unless your neurologist says it is safe — usually only after a long fit-free period.

Myths and facts

Myth	Fits are due to a curse, ghosts or past sins
Fact	Epilepsy is a medical condition of the brain
Myth	Faith healers, threads and amulets can cure it
Fact	They delay treatment and cause harm. Medicines work.
Myth	It is contagious; it means low intelligence
Fact	It does not spread, and most people with epilepsy have normal intelligence
Myth	People with epilepsy cannot marry or work
Fact	They can study, work, marry and have children. Since 1999, epilepsy is not a legal ground for divorce in India.

My fit diary

Date & time	What happened	How long	Missed dose / trigger

Cut out and keep in your wallet:

I have epilepsy. If I have a fit, turn me on my side and stay with me. Call 108 if it lasts over 5 minutes.

Name: _____

Medicines: _____

Emergency contact: _____

Appointments

Monday to Saturday · Closed on Sundays

Narayani Hospital

Consultation, tests & admission

Shree Vallabh Nagar, behind Chaan Hotel, near Mumbai Naka, Nashik 422009
Consult 11 am – 3 pm · Tests 10 am – 5 pm
Hospital open 24 hours for emergencies

☎ **0253 2224411**

Dr Anand Diwan Neurology Clinic

Evening consultation

11 Yashika Plaza, near Satyam Sweet, Govind Nagar, Nashik 422009
Consult 6 pm – 8 pm

☎ **0253 2472111**

Scan to book your appointment

Or book on WhatsApp

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WhatsApp is for booking appointments only.

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Read more online

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This booklet gives general information and does not replace medical advice. In an emergency, go to the nearest hospital.