



Seizures and Epilepsy

Exploring natural options and alternative remedies

A seizure is an episode of abnormal electrical activity in the brain. It can involve loss or reduction of consciousness, involuntary movements and overwhelming sensations. Seizures are generally thought to result from an electrical overload of the brain's nerve cells. It's estimated that serious seizure disorders affect one and a half million Americans and that up to five percent of the population (15 million people) will suffer from a seizure during their lifetime. But it's important to note that anyone can suffer a seizure if exposed to sufficiently high levels of heat, drugs, or other types of stress on the brain.

Sometimes seizures are related to a temporary condition, resulting from the use of recreational or pharmaceutical drugs, withdrawal from certain drugs, or abnormal levels of sodium or glucose in the blood. In these cases, they don't usually recur once the underlying problem is corrected.

In other cases, an injury to the brain causes it to be abnormally excitable on a regular basis. This can be the result of problems like a stroke, a blow to the head, a tumor in the brain, or a serious infection such as meningitis or encephalitis. In some people, this over-excitability can result from an inherited abnormality in the brain.

Seizures are generally classified as either "simple," in which there is no change in a person's level of consciousness, or "complex," in which a person loses consciousness completely or has a change in level of consciousness. They're also classified as generalized (where the whole body is affected) or focal (only one part or side of the body is affected). Within their broad categories, there are several different types of seizures.

Grand mal seizures are the most common type. They are characterized by symptoms such as stiffness or violent contractions of the body, loss of consciousness, temporary cessation of breathing and biting of the tongue or cheek.

Petit mal seizures occur most commonly in people under age 20, usually in children ages 6 to 12. Typically, they last only a few seconds, with full recovery occurring rapidly and no lingering confusion, though the person often doesn't remember having them. They usually are characterized by episodes of staring or "spacing out" during which the child's activity or speech ceases.

Epilepsy is a chronic disorder with recurrent seizures of any type. Scientists don't know much about what causes it, but some types of epilepsy have been shown to be hereditary.

These are not the only types of seizures and because the causes and types of seizures vary greatly, always consult a medical doctor when working with seizures to get appropriate diagnosis and help. But regardless of the particular type of seizure, the bot-

tom line is abnormal electrical activity in the brain. So, anything we do to boost the health of the electrical system in the brain may be helpful. So, in conjunction with medical treatment, here are some options to consider.

Seizures have been associated with malnutrition, hidden food allergies and hypoglycemia, as well as with the consumption of aspartame. Anyone experiencing seizures should replace aspartame with natural sweeteners like stevia, honey or evaporated sugar cane juice. It is also thought that seizures can result from years of ingesting small amounts of toxic metals and other poisons in refined and processed food. Avoiding all flavoring and commercially-processed and chemically refined food helps keep the body free of these dangerous toxins. And abstaining from sweets, coffee and alcoholic beverages (as well as eating regularly) will help avoid hypoglycemic seizures caused by a sudden drop in blood-sugar.

When it comes to supplements, a broad spectrum vitamin and mineral supplement, like Super Supplemental, should be considered. In particular, Vitamins A, C, E and the B-Complex should be taken, along with the minerals magnesium, calcium, chromium, zinc, manganese, and selenium. A cleansing program which includes Heavy Metal Detox may be helpful in reducing toxins in the body.

Herbalists have had some success in using nervine herbs to reduce the incidence and severity of seizures. Lobelia is probably one of the most powerful remedies and the first that should be considered, but Valerian, Passion Flower, skullcap and St. John's Wort may also be helpful.

Chickweed has been used for children's convulsions. It is made into a tea steeping 1 tablespoon of the dried herb in one cup of boiling water for ten minutes. Drinking this tea three times a day for a week has been reported to help convulsions disappear in some cases.

The neurotransmitter GABA has been helpful in some cases of seizures and epilepsy. GABA keeps the brain from over firing. It is manufactured from the amino acid glutamine with the help of vitamin B6. L-aurine is another amino acid which has been helpful for calming brain function in epilepsy and seizures. All three of these amino acids are found in the GABA Plus formula along with spirulina and passion flower.

For additional help with natural remedies for seizures, consult your local herb specialist, or some of the resources below.

Selected References

- The Comprehensive Guide To Nature's Sunshine Products* by Tree of Light Publishing
- The New Age Herbalist* by Richard Mabey
- The Wild Rose Scientific Herbal* by Terry Willard

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