

All about epilepsy

Hindustan Times (Gurugram) · 12 Feb 2024 · 4

Epilepsy is a neurological disorder characterised by recurrent seizures, which are sudden, uncontrolled electrical disturbances in the brain. These seizures can vary widely in their severity, frequency and type, depending on which part of the brain is affected and how extensively.

Epilepsy affects over 50 million people worldwide, making it one of the most common neurological disorders. Yet, awareness and knowledge remain surprisingly low, creating a significant need for education and understanding. Hence, every year on February 2, the health care community comes together to observe International Epilepsy Day in order to raise awareness about epilepsy, dispel myths surrounding the condition, and emphasise the importance of support for those living with epilepsy.

CAUSES OF EPILEPSY There can be multiple factors; common ones include:

Infections: Certain infections, such as meningitis, encephalitis, or brain abscesses, can cause inflammation of the brain and lead to epilepsy.

Brain injuries: They result from accidents, head trauma, or strokes.

Brain conditions: Tumours, cysts or malformations present at birth.

Developmental disorders: Conditions such as autism spectrum disorder or neurodevelopmental disorders may be associated with their increased risk.

Genetic factors: May be inherited or the result of certain genetic mutations.

CAN WE PREVENT EPILEPSY?

While it's not always possible, here are some measures:

Seek medical care: Prompt medical evaluation and treatment of head injuries can help minimise the risk of developing epilepsy following a traumatic brain injury.

Manage underlying health conditions: Controlling conditions such as high blood pressure, diabetes, or infections can lower the risk of epilepsy.

Adhere to treatment plans: Patients must follow prescribed treatment plans, including medication regimens and lifestyle modifications.

Avoid triggers: Avoid potential triggers that may precipitate seizures, such as lack of sleep, stress, flashing lights or certain medications.

Prenatal care: Pregnant women should receive proper prenatal care to minimise the risk of birth complications or developmental abnormalities that increase the likelihood of epilepsy in their children.

Genetic counselling: Individuals with a family history of epilepsy or genetic predisposition may benefit from genetic counselling to understand their risk and explore preventive measures.

By raising awareness, we can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for people with epilepsy worldwide. Early diagnosis, appropriate treatment, and lifestyle modifications are key to managing the condition and improving the overall quality of life.

The author of this article is

Dr Rajnish Kumar.

Disclaimer: The veracity of the claims made in this article is the responsibility of the hospital and doctor concerned.