

Epilepsy Nurse Specialist Service

What is epilepsy?

Epilepsy is one of the most common neurological conditions in the world. There are approximately 600,000 people in the UK with a known diagnosis. It is identified by seizures which are caused by excessive electrical activity in the brain.

The impact of epilepsy can vary considerably from person to person depending on which part of the brain is affected. Epilepsy can affect anyone of any age, gender, race or ethnicity, but is most commonly diagnosed in childhood and in people over the age of 60.

Seizure types

There are over 40 different types of seizure, but the International League Against Epilepsy (ILAE) have identified three main types:

- **Generalised onset** - involves large areas on both sides of the brain and often results in a loss of consciousness.
- **Focal onset** - affects a specific region in one side of the brain where consciousness may be altered but is not lost.
- **Seizures of unknown onset** - the origin of the seizure is unclear.

Diagnosis

Epilepsy can be difficult to diagnose as other conditions often cause similar symptoms. It is usually diagnosed following at least two seizures occurring more than 24 hours apart. A GP makes a referral to a specialist neurologist who will use patient and witness accounts to develop a history. It is then likely that there will be a range of investigations conducted to help form a complete picture of the situation.

Treatment

In most cases, seizures associated with epilepsy can be controlled with medication but up to a third of people have drug resistant epilepsy, which means that other treatments may be more suitable. Antiepileptic medications (AEDs) are available in a range of doses and forms, such as tablets, liquids and syrups, nasal sprays, injections, and suppositories.

The majority of people with epilepsy will achieve seizure control with one AED (called monotherapy), but some will require treatment with two or more drugs (known as polytherapy).

What is the Epilepsy Nurse Specialist Service?

An Epilepsy Nurse Specialist (ENS) Service is based at the East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust. You may be referred to the ENS service for expert help and support with managing your epilepsy diagnosis.

The ENS offers outpatient nurse-led clinics, telephone advice and support for patients in hospital, working closely with the neurology consultants at the Lister, New QEII and Hertford County Hospitals.

The ENS aims to enhance the quality of life and experience for people with epilepsy, their carers, family, and other healthcare professionals by sharing information and providing support.

The aim is also to increase awareness of the specific needs of people with epilepsy when in hospital by acting as a resource of information, supporting medicines management, and providing education where a need is identified.

The ENS can act as a link between hospital services, GPs, and services in the community.

Please be aware the Epilepsy Nurse Specialist Service is only available for patients aged 16 and over who have been referred by their neurologist.

Further information

Epilepsy Action www.epilepsy.org.uk

- Helpline 0808 800 5050

Epilepsy Society www.epilepsysociety.org.uk

- Helpline 01494 601 400

Young Epilepsy www.youngepilepsy.org.uk

Epilepsy Research Institute UK www.epilepsyresearch.org.uk

Useful contact details

East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust:

- Website www.enherts-tr.nhs.uk
- Telephone 01438 314333

Neurology Secretaries:

- Email - neurologysecretaries.enh-tr@nhs.net

If you have any concerns that require immediate attention, please contact your GP.

Out of Hours - You are advised to call:

Hertfordshire Emergency Out of Hours Doctors

- Telephone 0300 033 3333

NHS 111 can help if you have an urgent medical problem and you're not sure what to do. It is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week - Telephone 111.

Leaflet information

You can request this information in a different format or another language;
please speak to your doctor or nurse.

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