

## Non-Epileptic Spells

### What is an epileptic seizure?

A seizure is a short, strong surge of electrical activity in the brain that causes a sudden change in mental or physical functions

### What is a non-epileptic spell?

A non-epileptic spell is a brief change in a person's actions that isn't caused by unusual or abnormal electrical activity in the brain. It can feel and look like an epileptic seizure.

### What causes a non-epileptic spells?

Non-epileptic spells are caused by stress or emotional upset.

### How are non-epileptic spells diagnosed?

They are found by doing an EEG (electroencephalograph) during a non-epileptic spell. The EEG lets the doctor see if there are any changes in the electrical activity in the brain when the spells happen.

During a non-epileptic spell, the EEG pattern will be normal. During an epileptic seizure, the EEG will show abnormal electrical activity in the brain. This testing is most often done in a video EEG monitoring unit (EMU).

### How are non-epileptic spells treated?

Non-epileptic spells are treated with mental therapy and/or psychiatric drugs. Seizure medicines won't stop non-epileptic spells.

Some people have both epileptic seizures and non-epileptic spells. These people will need to stay on their seizure medicine to control their epileptic seizures.

The health care team may include a primary care doctor, a neurologist or seizure disorder specialist, a psychologist or psychiatrist, a social worker, and nurse.

### You should know:

Someone with non-epileptic spells isn't "faking it". They have a health problem that's out of their control. Some people with non-epileptic spells have depression, anxiety, or personality disorders. Some have no visible mental problems which is why people with these spells need to be checked and treated person-by-person.