Non-epileptic Seizures (Pseudoseizures)

Non-epileptic seizures look like true epileptic seizures. The difference between non-epileptic seizures and real seizures is that real seizures are caused by an electrical abnormality in the brain. Non-epileptic seizures have no medical cause. Non-epileptic seizures may look real to an untrained person. A neurologist can usually tell the difference between a real seizure and a non-epileptic seizure. Non-epileptic seizures may also be called pseudoseizures. They are more frequent in women.

CAUSES

In general, the patient is unaware that the movements are not real seizures. This disorder is caused by stress or emotional trauma. Patients often feel badly. Patients are sometimes accused of causing the seizure-like movements when they are not aware that their symptoms are due to stress. The non-epileptic seizures are real and frightening to patients with this disorder. Sometimes, non-epileptic seizures may be due to a person faking the symptoms to get something he or she wants.

DIAGNOSIS

The diagnosis requires the patient to be continuously monitored by:

- EEG (electroencephalogram).
- Video camera.

After an episode, the patient is asked about their awareness, memory, and feelings during the seizure. The family, if present, also discusses what they see. The EEG and clinical information allows the neurologist to determine if the seizures are related to abnormal electrical activity in the brain.

TREATMENT

Medicines may be stopped if the patient has been treated for a true seizure disorder. Patient counseling is usually begun. Depression and anxiety, if present, are treated. Counseling helps to resolve stress.

PROGNOSIS

People with non-epileptic seizures may go on to lead a normal life once the stress has been treated.

Document Released: 02/02/2007 Document Re-Released: 10/15/2010
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.