Lennox-Gastaut Syndrome

Lennox-Gastaut syndrome is a severe form of epilepsy (a seizure disorder). It usually develops in children between 1 and 8 years old and is characterized by several types of seizures (convulsions), developmental delay, and behavioral disturbances such as poor social skills and attention-seeking behavior. Most children with Lennox-Gastaut syndrome experience some degree of impaired intellectual functioning or information processing. The disorder may be caused by brain injury, severe brain infections, genetic brain diseases, or developmental malformations of the brain. In some cases, no cause can be found. Seizure types, which vary among patients, include tonic (stiffening of the body, upward deviation of the eyes, dilation (enlargement) of the pupils, and altered respiratory patterns), atonic (brief loss of muscle tone and consciousness, causing abrupt falls), atypical absence (staring spells), and myoclonic (sudden muscle jerks). There may be periods of frequent seizures mixed with brief, relatively seizure-free periods.

TREATMENT

Treatment for Lennox-Gastaut syndrome may include anti-epileptic medication to control seizures. However, the types of seizures associated with Lennox-Gastaut syndrome are generally difficult to control due to their resistance to most anti-epileptic drugs.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN

The prognosis (likely outcome) for individuals with Lennox-Gastaut syndrome varies. There is no cure for the disorder. Complete recovery including freedom from seizures and normal development is very unusual.

RESEARCH BEING DONE

The NINDS conducts and supports a broad program of basic and clinical research on epilepsy including Lennox-Gastaut syndrome. These studies are aimed at finding the causes of these disorders, improving the diagnosis (learning what is wrong), and developing new medications and other therapies.

Research is continually being done to learn more about this problem.

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