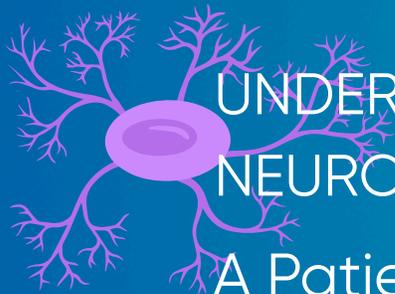


# UNDERSTANDING NEUROLOGICAL CONDITIONS



A Patient Guide





# UNDERSTANDING NEUROLOGICAL CONDITIONS

## A Patient Guide

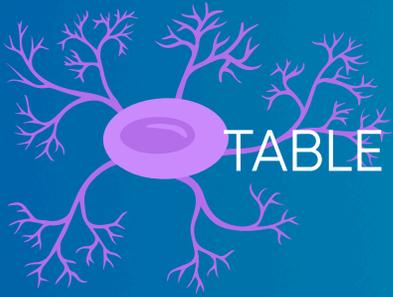


This booklet will help you learn about neurological conditions. You will find out what causes them, how they are treated, and what you can do to feel better.

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## WHAT ARE NEUROLOGICAL CONDITIONS?



**Neurological conditions** affect your brain, spinal cord, and nerves. Your nervous system controls everything your body does. It helps you move, think, feel, and even breathe.

When something goes wrong with your nervous system, it can cause many different problems. You might have trouble moving, thinking, or controlling your muscles.

Think of it this way: Your nervous system is like the electrical wiring in your house. Your brain is the main control panel. Nerves are like wires that carry messages to every part of your body. When the wiring has problems, things don't work the way they should.

### **Key Terms to Know**

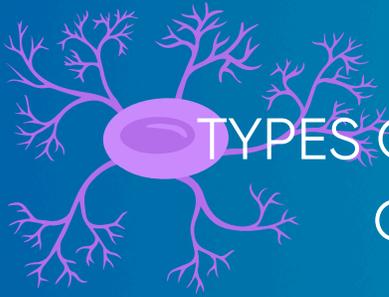
**Nervous System:** The brain, spinal cord, and nerves that control your body.

**Neurons:** Cells in your blood that carry oxygen to your body.

**Neurotransmitters:** Special cells that send messages through your nervous system.

#### References:

1. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. "Brain Basics: Know Your Brain." NINDS, NIH. <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/public-education/brain-basics/brain-basics-know-your-brain>
2. Mayo Clinic. "Nervous System." MayoClinic.org. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions>
3. MedlinePlus. "Neurologic Diseases." MedlinePlus.gov. <https://medlineplus.gov/neurologicdiseases.html>



# TYPES OF NEUROLOGICAL CONDITIONS



There are many types of neurological conditions. Here are some common ones



## MOVEMENT DISORDERS

Problems controlling how you move. May cause shaking, stiffness, or unwanted movements. Examples: Tardive Dyskinesia, Huntington's Disease



## SEIZURE DISORDERS

Sudden bursts of electrical activity in the brain. Can cause convulsions or staring spells. Examples: Epilepsy, Lennox-Gastaut Syndrome



## MIGRAINE

Severe headaches often with nausea, light sensitivity, and vision changes. More than just a bad headache.



## AUTONOMIC DISORDERS

Problems with automatic body functions like blood pressure, heart rate, and digestion. Example: Orthostatic Hypotension



## MUSCLE CONTROL

Conditions that affect how your brain controls your muscles. Example: Infantile Spasms

**Important:** Each person's experience is different. Your doctor will work with you to find the best treatment plan for your specific condition.

### References:

1. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. "Disorder Index." NINDS, NIH. <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/disorders>
2. Epilepsy Foundation. "Types of Seizures." Epilepsy.com. <https://www.epilepsy.com/what-is-epilepsy/seizure-types>
3. American Migraine Foundation. "What is Migraine?" <https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/what-is-migraine/>



# SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

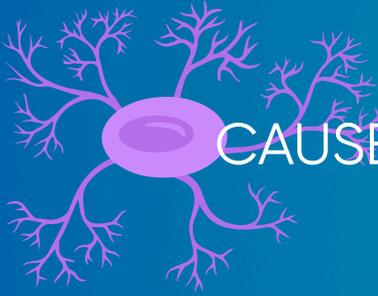


Symptoms depend on which part of your nervous system is affected	Common signs include:
HEAD AND BRAIN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Headaches or migraines</li><li>• Dizziness or vertigo</li><li>• Trouble thinking or remembering</li><li>• Confusion</li></ul>
MOVEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shaking or tremors</li><li>• Muscle stiffness</li><li>• Unwanted movements you can't control</li><li>• Trouble walking or balance problems</li></ul>
SENSES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vision changes</li><li>• Sensitivity to light or sound</li><li>• Numbness or tingling</li><li>• Pain</li></ul>
OTHER SYMPTOMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Seizures</li><li>• Fainting or feeling lightheaded when standing</li><li>• Fatigue</li><li>• Sleep problems</li></ul>

**Important:** Symptoms may come and go. Some days may be better than others. Keep track of your symptoms to share with your doctor.

References:

1. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. "Disorder Index." NINDS, NIH. <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/disorders>
2. Epilepsy Foundation. "Types of Seizures." Epilepsy.com. <https://www.epilepsy.com/what-is-epilepsy/seizure-types>
3. American Migraine Foundation. "What is Migraine?" <https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/what-is-migraine/>



# CAUSES & RISK FACTORS



## Neurological conditions can have many causes:

### Genetics

- Family history of neurological conditions
- Gene changes passed down from parents
- Some conditions run in families

### Brain Chemistry

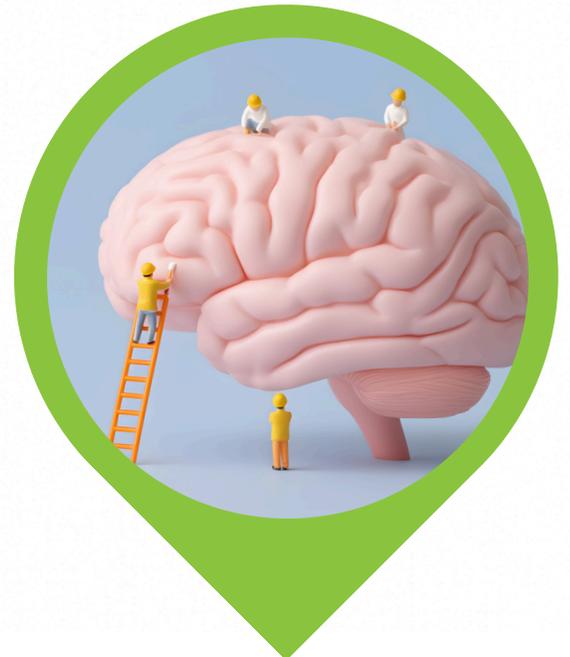
- Imbalance of chemicals in the brain
- Problems with neurotransmitters like dopamine
- Sometimes caused by medications

### Injury or Illness

- Head injuries
- Infections that affect the brain
- Stroke or lack of oxygen to the brain

### Other Factors

- Age (some conditions are more common as we get older)
- Other health conditions
- Environmental factors



### Risk Factors to Know

- Family history of neurological problems
- Previous head injury
- Certain medications (especially long-term use)
- Other medical conditions like diabetes or heart disease
- Alcohol or drug use

**Remember:** Having a risk factor doesn't mean you will get a condition. Many people with risk factors never develop problems.

#### References:

1. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. "Neurological Disorders." NINDS, NIH.
2. World Health Organization. "Neurological Disorders." WHO.int.



## How are These Conditions Found?

Your doctor will use several tools to diagnose your condition:

### Medical History

What It Checks: Your symptoms, family history, and health background

Why It Matters: Helps the doctor understand the full picture

### Neurological Exam

What It Checks: Your reflexes, strength, balance, and coordination

Why It Matters: Shows how well your nervous system is working

### Brain Imaging (MRI or CT Scan)

What It Checks: Pictures of your brain

Why It Matters: Looks for damage, tumors, or other problems

### EEG (Electroencephalogram)

What It Checks: Electrical activity in your brain

Why It Matters: Helps diagnose seizures and other brain conditions

### Blood Tests

What It Checks: Overall health and specific markers

Why It Matters: Rules out other conditions and checks for infections

**Finding the Cause:** *Finding the Cause: Your doctor may order several tests to understand your condition. This helps them create the best treatment plan for you.*

#### References:

1. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. "Neurological Diagnostic Tests." NINDS, NIH.
2. Mayo Clinic. "EEG (electroencephalogram)." MayoClinic.org.



## WHAT TO EXPECT



### Disease Course



Every person's journey is different. Here's what you should know:

#### Some Conditions Are Chronic

This means they last a long time or for life. With the right treatment, many people live full, active lives.

#### Symptoms May Change

- Some days will be better than others
- Stress, sleep, and diet can affect symptoms
- Keeping a symptom diary helps you and your doctor

#### Treatment Takes Time

- Finding the right medication may take a while
- Your doctor may need to adjust doses
- Be patient and communicate openly with your care team

#### References:

1. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. "Neurological Diagnostic Tests." NINDS, NIH.
2. Mayo Clinic. "EEG (electroencephalogram)." MayoClinic.org.



## WHAT TO EXPECT



### Disease Course

Every person's journey is different. Here's what you should know:

#### You Are Not Alone

- Support groups can help
- Family and friends can learn about your condition
- Mental health support is important too

#### Co-Morbid Conditions

Some neurological conditions can occur with other health problems:

- Depression or anxiety
- Sleep disorders
- Memory problems
- Chronic pain

Tell your doctor about **ALL** your symptoms so they can treat the whole picture.

#### References:

1. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. "Neurological Diagnostic Tests." NINDS, NIH.
2. Mayo Clinic. "EEG (electroencephalogram)." MayoClinic.org.



## TREATMENT OPTIONS



Treatment depends on your specific condition. Your doctor will create a plan just for you.

ORAL MEDICATION	Pills or capsules taken by mouth. May control symptoms, prevent episodes, or balance brain chemicals.
INJECTABLE MEDICATIONS	Shots given at home or doctor's office. Some are given monthly for prevention.
PHYSICAL THERAPY	Exercises to improve strength, balance, and coordination.
OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY	Helps you do daily activities more easily.
LIFESTYLE CHANGES	Diet, sleep, stress management, and exercise can all help.
SURGERY	For some conditions, surgery may be an option when other treatments don't work.

### References:

1. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. "Disorder Index." NINDS, NIH. <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/disorders>
2. Epilepsy Foundation. "Types of Seizures." Epilepsy.com. <https://www.epilepsy.com/what-is-epilepsy/seizure-types>
3. American Migraine Foundation. "What is Migraine?" <https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/what-is-migraine/>



## SELF-MONITORING: LIVING WELL



You play a big role in managing your condition. Here's how:

### Keep a Symptom Diary

- Write down when symptoms happen
- Note what you were doing, eating, or feeling
- Track your sleep patterns
- Bring this diary to doctor visits

### Know Your Triggers

Common triggers for many neurological conditions:

- Lack of sleep
- Stress
- Certain foods or drinks
- Skipping medications
- Alcohol

### Healthy Habits That Help

- Get regular sleep (same bedtime each night)
- Exercise as your doctor recommends
- Eat a balanced diet
- Stay hydrated
- Manage stress with relaxation techniques

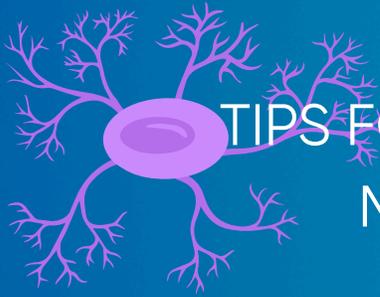
### Safety Tips

- Don't drive if your condition affects your ability to do so safely
- Make your home safe to prevent falls
- Wear medical ID jewelry if you have seizures
- Have a plan for emergencies



#### References:

1. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. "Disorder Index." NINDS, NIH. <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/disorders>
2. Epilepsy Foundation. "Types of Seizures." Epilepsy.com. <https://www.epilepsy.com/what-is-epilepsy/seizure-types>
3. American Migraine Foundation. "What is Migraine?" <https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/what-is-migraine/>



## TIPS FOR TAKING YOUR MEDICATION



- Take your medication at the same time every day
- Use a pill box or phone alarm to remember doses
- Keep a list of all your medications
- Tell your doctor about all medicines, vitamins, and supplements you take
- Store medications properly (check the label)
- Refill prescriptions before you run out
- Ask questions if you don't understand something



- Stop taking medication without talking to your doctor
- Skip doses or take extra doses
- Share your medication with others
- Crush or split pills unless your doctor says it's okay
- Mix alcohol with your medication without asking first
- Ignore side effects - report them to your doctor

**Common Side Effects:** Tiredness, dizziness, nausea, headache, weight changes

*If side effects bother you: Talk to your doctor. They may be able to adjust your dose or try a different medication.*

### References:

1. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. "Disorder Index." NINDS, NIH. <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/disorders>
2. Epilepsy Foundation. "Types of Seizures." Epilepsy.com. <https://www.epilepsy.com/what-is-epilepsy/seizure-types>
3. American Migraine Foundation. "What is Migraine?" <https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/what-is-migraine/>



## WHEN TO CALL YOUR DOCTOR



### ! CALL 911 OR GO TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM IF YOU HAVE:

- A seizure lasting more than 5 minutes
- A first-time seizure
- Trouble breathing
- Sudden severe headache (worst of your life)
- Sudden numbness or weakness on one side
- Sudden trouble speaking or understanding
- Loss of consciousness
- Injury during a seizure
- Seizure in water



### ! CALL YOUR DOCTOR'S OFFICE IF:

- Your symptoms are getting worse
- You have new symptoms
- Your medication isn't working
- You can't tolerate your medication's side effects
- You feel depressed or anxious
- You have trouble sleeping
- You have questions about your treatment

***Keep Your Follow-Up Appointments!***

***Your doctor will check how well your treatment is working and make changes if needed.***

References:

1. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. "Disorder Index." NINDS, NIH. <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/disorders>
2. Epilepsy Foundation. "Types of Seizures." Epilepsy.com. <https://www.epilepsy.com/what-is-epilepsy/seizure-types>
3. American Migraine Foundation. "What is Migraine?" <https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/what-is-migraine/>



# GLOSSARY



AUTONOMIC	Body functions you don't control, like heart rate and digestion
CHRONIC	A condition that lasts a long time or for life
DOPAMINE	A brain chemical that helps control movement and mood
EEG	Test that measures electrical activity in the brain
EPILEPSY	A condition that causes repeated seizures
MIGRAINE	A type of severe headache with other symptoms
MRI	A scan that takes detailed pictures of the brain
NEUROLOGIST	A doctor who treats brain and nerve conditions
NEURONS	Cells that send messages through your nervous system
NEUROTRANSMITTER	Chemicals that help brain cells communicate
ORTHOSTATIC	Related to standing up
SEIZURE	A sudden burst of electrical activity in the brain
TARDIVE DYSKINESIA	Unwanted movements caused by certain medications
TREMOR	Shaking that you cannot control
VERTIGO	Feeling like you or the room is spinning



## Learn More:

- National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke: [ninds.nih.gov](http://ninds.nih.gov)
- Epilepsy Foundation: [epilepsy.com](http://epilepsy.com)
- American Migraine Foundation: [americanmigrainefoundation.org](http://americanmigrainefoundation.org)
- American Academy of Neurology: [aan.com](http://aan.com)
- Mayo Clinic - Neurological Conditions: [mayoclinic.org/departments-centers/neurology](http://mayoclinic.org/departments-centers/neurology)
- Cleveland Clinic - Neurological Institute: [my.clevelandclinic.org/departments/neurological](http://my.clevelandclinic.org/departments/neurological)
- MedlinePlus - Neurologic Diseases: [medlineplus.gov/neurologicdiseases.html](http://medlineplus.gov/neurologicdiseases.html)



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