

The Epi-Surfer

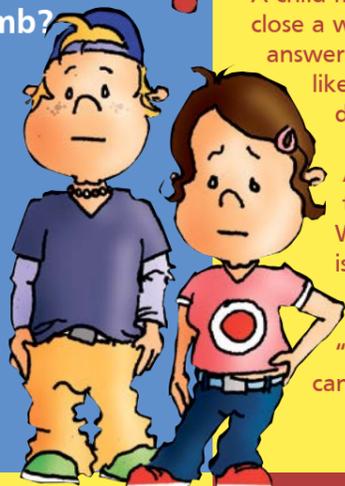


Am I responsible for my seizures?

Not at all, your heritage is not your fault neither the changes that occur in your brain.

Will I become dumb?

No, during the seizures no brain cells die. If the seizures occur very often, the brain does not have the time to learn the things which you want to learn. After the seizures you will be just as before – do not worry!



Which kind of seizures have I got?

We know of two forms of seizures, the "generalized" one and the one that spreads from the seat of epilepsy. Each form has further subdivisions.

Generalized seizures

The "grand-mal-seizure" causes the child to stiffen (tonic), he drops to the ground and quivers. Sometimes the quivering tongue causes the saliva to foam, which drips from the mouth. Usually these seizures last no longer than 1–3 minutes, this could last even longer depending on the child.

The "absence" is a short loss of consciousness, which causes the child to remain in his activity, his eyesight gets rigid and he looks upward. These seizures usually merely last a few seconds.

Myoclonic seizures

These are short, isolated convulsions of the arms or even of the whole body. When this happens a toothbrush could fly through the air, but unfortunately also a cup of hot tea. Consciousness is seriously affected or the child is completely unconscious.

Focal (or partial) seizures

In the case of a simple-focal seizure a particular point or region of the brain reacts. The child may only quiver a little or he feels something is about to happen which does not seem to exist in reality. He is perfectly conscious but unable to suppress some particular movement.

A complex-focal seizure manifests when several parts of the brain are involved. A child may push a chair through the class-room and constantly open and close a window. He seems to react to his surroundings and seems to give answers but they do not make any sense. Consciousness is not restricted like people who are partly asleep when dreaming and cannot distinguish between dream and reality.

A secondary generalized seizure may begin with quivering fingers, then the hand, arm, one half of the body and then the second half. While the seizure lasts, consciousness dwindles. This focal beginning is also called presentiment (or: "aura.")

After all these listed seizures, the children are either immediately "fit" or they feel miserable or they suffer from severe headache. This can differ from child to child or from seizure to seizure.



What is the origin of my epilepsy?

A predisposition or inclination to an epilepsy, inherited by a parent, is matched by a trigger that could be brain damage or disease though in some cases it still remains unknown.



What shall I tell my friends?

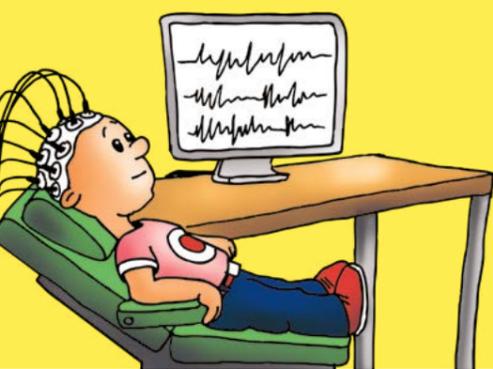
You or your parents should tell your friends and relatives what your seizures look like and what they could do. Normally nothing. Then they should be told how you feel afterwards, if you are fine or need some rest. Perhaps your parents should be contacted.

Who else – besides myself – have such seizures?

Anybody with that disposition may develop epilepsy, regardless of being intelligent or not: like Cesar, the musician Handel, the painter van Gogh, the poet Dostoyevsky, and DJ Ötzi.

What is going on in my head when I have a seizure?

The brain or a part of it react in form of the epilepsy which causes the seizures. It is possible to measure (with an EEG) changes of the electric potential, which show which part of the brain reacts.



How can you "see" that I have epilepsy?

First of all, of course it is the seizure. The propensity of having seizures can be seen in the EEG. In-between seizures nothing indicates epilepsy. The child is healthy.



Can I completely regain my healthy?

There are epilepsies that disappear with puberty. Some children outgrow epilepsy, after having been free of seizures and taken their medication for a number of years that had been constantly reduced. One group of children will depend on medication their whole lives.

This predisposition will remain a life long. In any case, known triggers such as stroboscopic lights or lack of sleep, should definitely be avoided.

Are the drugs really that important?

Yes. Without medication the brain could adjust itself to the epileptic seizures and possibly even develop different forms of seizures. Due to medication about 80% of all children are eventually free of seizures. The remaining 20% demand a longer search for a proper treatment.



What about gym activities?

Sports are great. Together with your doctor and parents you should find out which physical exercises would agree with you. Sometimes precautions should be taken like a lifejacket or a cycle helmet.



Any suggestions for first aid?

When you see another child having a seizure, you should do this:

1. Stay calm
2. Look at your watch and call out the time, if you say it aloud you won't forget so easily
3. Put something soft (jacket, pullover) under his head
4. Remove all objects that could hurt the child when in close proximity
5. Do not introduce any objects into his mouth (danger of hurting him)
6. If you don't know if he has an "epileptic attack", call the emergency service; there is the possibility that it is not an epileptic seizure
7. Stay with the child all the time until he regains consciousness; inform his parents



If any questions remain, contact:



epilepsie bundes-elternverband
gemeinsam meistern

kontakt@epilepsie-elternverband.de

www.epilepsie-elternverband.de
www.epikurier.de

Even though I have an illness that is the most common one of childhood, I do not know any children in my neighbourhood who also have epilepsy. The parents of our support group believe that the reason is that most people do not like mentioning it. Some neighbours might believe that brain cells would be destroyed while having seizures, which would reduce children's intelligence.

But my doctor says that this is not true at all and that it is an ancient prejudice. Only correct information can help. I am going to surf now in the web.

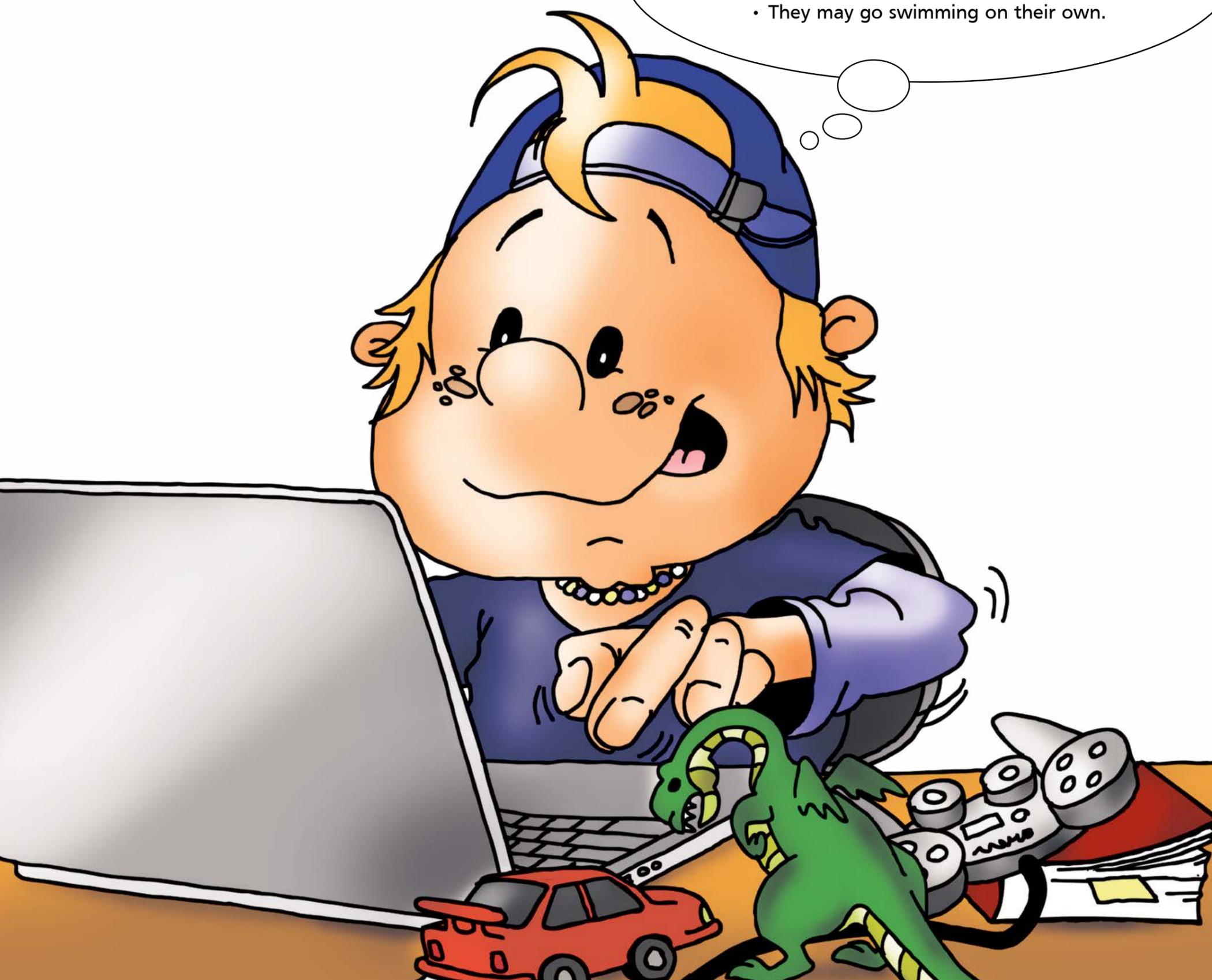
Let's see what I can find out.

What have I got in common with other kids of my age?

- I can join class outings
- I can play soccer
- I can play computer games
- I can have parties
- I can watch movies

What difference is there to my classmates?

- Most of them do not have to take medicine
- They see the doctor when they are ill and not for check-ups
- They may go swimming on their own.



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