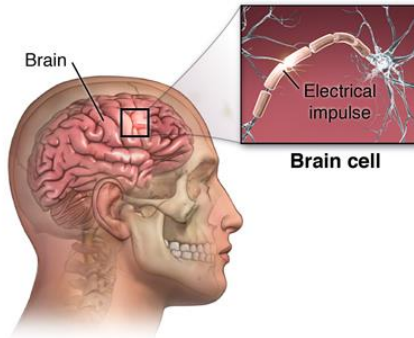


Health Trends

Seizure Disorders and Epilepsy

A seizure disorder

is a nervous system condition characterized by a change in the brain's electrical activity. A seizure is defined as a sudden uncontrolled rush of electrical energy in the brain (2).



Seizure disorder and epilepsy are more common among individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) than the general population. Epilepsy is one of the most common secondary conditions in the IDD population (1). Seizure disorders are considered one of the main fatal conditions for individuals with IDD, leading to many avoidable hospital admissions, and needless deaths.

A Single Seizure versus Epilepsy

Not every person who has a seizure has epilepsy. Having one seizure does not mean a person has epilepsy. Epilepsy is defined as experiencing two or more seizures within a 24-hour period that have no known cause or specific triggers (2). Epilepsy is not contagious. It cannot be spread from person to person (4).

The majority of individuals who suffer from a seizure disorder and/or epilepsy are able to live fairly normal lives with ongoing healthcare monitoring and medical management to balance and control seizure activity (1).

Seizure Types, Signs & Symptoms

Seizures are typically classified into two categories: Generalized and Focal (2).

Common seizure symptoms include:

- Brief mental confusion.
- Brief staring off into space.
- Abnormal body movements.
- Loss of awareness or consciousness.
- Emotional changes (2).



Seizure signs and symptoms can vary greatly and may be mild to severe (2). Some individuals experience multiple types of seizures (4).

Possible Causes of Seizure Disorder or Epilepsy

In many cases the cause of a seizure disorder is unknown. Any person can have a random seizure, which may or may not return. Any disturbance of normal cell activity in the brain can lead to a seizure (4).

Seizures can occur due to health issues such as:

- Traumatic brain or body injury (3).
- Abnormal brain development.
- Genetic factors.
- Sleep disorders.
- Injuries occurring during the neonatal period or during birth (5).

Several health conditions can cause seizure activity but may resolve after treatment. Some examples include:

- Fever.
- Electrolyte imbalances.
- Alcohol withdrawal.
- Heart attack (Myocardial Infarction).
- Stroke.
- Bleeding, inflammation or swelling in the brain.
- Infections such as meningitis, HIV-related infections, or viral encephalitis (4).

When to Seek Medical Help and Call 911

The average length of a seizure is between 30 seconds to two minutes. Seizures lasting longer than five minutes or occurring repeatedly are unlikely to end on their own. The seizure scenarios below require immediate emergency medical attention (2).

If an individual is experiencing any of the following, **CALL 911**:

- An individual is having a first seizure.
- An individual is having a seizure lasting for more than five minutes.
- An individual is having multiple seizures (3 or more) occurring one right after another.
- Multiple seizures (3 or more) occurring within one hour.

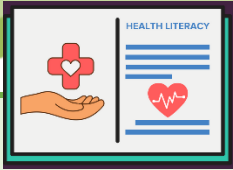
To learn more about Seizure Disorder you can find the Office of Integrated Health Supports Network Health & Safety Alerts on our website at <https://dbhds.virginia.gov/office-of-integrated-health/>

Please direct questions or concerns regarding the "Health Trends" newsletter to the Office of Integrated Health Supports Network (OIHSN) at communitynursing@dbhds.virginia.gov

Reference

1. Devinsky, O., Asato, M., Camfield, P., Geller, E., Kanner, A. M., Keller, S., Kerr, M., Kossoff, E. H., Lau, H., Kothare, S., Singh, B. K., & Wirrell, E. (2015, October). Delivery of epilepsy care to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *Neurology*, 85(17), 1512-1521.
2. Mayo Clinic (2023, September). Seizures: Overview. *Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research (MFMER)*.
3. Kiriakopoulos, E., Kanner, A.M., & Shafer, P.O. (2019, October). Understanding seizures. *The Epilepsy Foundation*.
4. National Institute of Neurological Disorders & Stoke. (2024, July). Seizures and epilepsy. *National Institute of Health (NIH)*.
5. Pisani, F., Spagnoli, C., Falsaperla, R., Nagarajan, L., & Ramantani, G. (2021). Seizures in the neonate: A review of etiologies and outcomes. *Seizure*, 85, 48-56.

Health Trends



October is Health Literacy Month

Effective health communication helps all of us. Many people have trouble finding, understanding, and using health information. Even strong health literacy skills can falter at times of stress — such as during a health crisis.

Health literacy incorporates a range of abilities: reading, comprehending, and analyzing information; decoding instructions, symbols, charts, and diagrams; weighing risks and benefits; and, ultimately, making decisions and taking an action.

Individuals, families, communities and systems are all involved in effective health literacy. The concept of health literacy encompasses the materials, environments, and challenges specifically associated with disease prevention and health promotion.

Health Literacy Month is a time to recognize the importance of making health information easy to understand and the health care system easier to navigate.

Healthy People 2030, an initiative of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), defines health literacy in two ways:

1. **Personal health literacy** is how well a person can find, understand, and use information and services to make decisions about their own health and the health of others.
2. **Organizational health literacy** is how well organizations equitably help all people find, understand, and use information and services to make decisions about their own health and others.

The benefits of effective health communications include:

- Better patient self-management = Better health outcomes. Effective health communication helps patients take better care of their health.
- Better use of healthcare services = More efficient, less costly healthcare. At the same time, effective health communication improves use of healthcare services.
- Higher patient satisfaction. Effective health communication also boosts patient satisfaction.
- Higher rewards for healthcare providers and organizations.
- Fewer legal problems for healthcare providers and organizations.

To learn more about Health Literacy Month and effective health communications check out the Institute for Healthcare Advancement (IHA) at <https://healthliteracymonth.org/>

References:

1. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (OASH). (2020, October). October Is health literacy month! [Internet]
2. Institute for Healthcare Advancement (IHA). (2025, January). October is health literacy month! Build health literacy through action. [Internet]
3. National Institutes of Health (NIH). (2025, February). Health literacy [Internet]

ABA SNIPPETS ...

Turning the Terror of Corrective Feedback into a Treat

Most of us, if not all, have had horrific experiences of being on the receiving end of corrective feedback. I'm sure there is at least one ghoul that haunted you when you interacted with them because of a history of aversive feedback. These interactions may have felt demeaning, overly critical, unspecific, and focused on attitudes rather than observable behaviors. Being the provider of corrective feedback can be a bit of a "terror" as well as ridden with unpleasant emotions; however, it can be less of a fright and more effective when it's delivered correctly.

Feedback is often defined in the behavior analytic literature as the critical and most effective component when providing training (3). It can be an effective way of improving a person's performance across a myriad of different skills. To avoid a nightmare of performance issues, provide positive feedback on a 4:1 ratio at the very least when giving consistent feedback (2). Model desirable behaviors of delivering feedback by being empathetic, sincere, specific, and following through on action steps (1).

When providing corrective feedback, consider starting with a positive/empathetic statement followed by a specific description of behaviors done correctly. Specify behaviors done incorrectly along with their impact. Seek input and summarize any feedback provided by the person. Propose an objective plan for behavior change while also describing the benefits. Ask questions to make sure the person understands the feedback given and seek acceptability. Discuss subsequent actions for follow up and end with a positive/empathetic statement (1).

For a deeper dive on this topic, please visit the [Behavioral Services Website](#) and click on the training ***Beyond "Good Job": Leveraging Principles of Behavior for Effective Feedback***.

You may contact DBHDS about these efforts via the following:

John.Tolson@dbhds.virginia.gov

References:

1. Bartle, G. E., Paslay, K., Vo, A., Chavez, M., King, C., DiGennaro Reed, F. D., (2024). Feedback toolkit: Your guide to intentional conversations. Association for Professional Behavior Analysts Member Resources.
2. Daniels, A.C., & Daniel, J.D. (2007). Measure of a leader: The legendary leadership formula for producing exceptional performers and outstanding results. McGraw Hill.
3. Hess, A., Garcia, Y., Gould, E., & Catagnus, R. (2022). Enhancing supervisory relationships with values and committed action training. Journal of Contextual Behavioral Science, 26, 241–252. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcbs.2022.10.009>

