

They Can Start Small

Partial-onset seizures may be less dramatic but are still quite dangerous.

Sometimes when Debbie C. has a seizure, it lasts only 10 to 15 seconds. "I get an odd, wavy sensation in my head—just an aura," she says. "I remain conscious and can keep going about my day."

Other times—more often for Debbie, in fact—that wavy sensation becomes more physical. "Sometimes I also tense up my arms and make fists or make laughing noises," she explains.

Neither of these seizures is a tonic-clonic seizure—those seizures most people think about when they think "epilepsy." A tonic-clonic seizure affects the whole body. In the "tonic"

phase, the muscles stiffen, a person will lose consciousness, and may fall to the ground. Then in the "clonic" phase, muscles can jerk rapidly and repeatedly, bending at the joints. These tonic-clonic seizures usually last from one to three minutes.

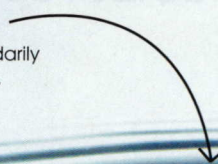
The seizures that Debbie describes are different. They are known as "partial-onset" seizures. They start with an electrical disturbance in one small area of the brain. And a partial-onset seizure can affect people in dozens of different ways. It might cause a tingling. It might spark a sense of déjà vu, or a strange smell. It might cause a person to swing a limb rhythmically



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A simple partial seizure may also become a complex partial seizure, or a secondarily generalized seizure.



60% of people with epilepsy have partial-onset seizures. Do you know if you do?

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