Epilepsy Surgery
Making a decision about treatment

What is epilepsy surgery?
Most of the time, your child’s healthcare team will try to manage or control seizures from epilepsy by using medicines. Sometimes these do not work. There are other options to discuss with your child’s healthcare team to control seizures. Epilepsy surgery is one of these treatment options.

There are different kinds of epilepsy surgeries. These surgeries cut out or separate the part of your child’s brain where seizures start from the rest of their brain.

Epilepsy surgery is not right for everyone. It does not always work to control seizures, and there are some possible harms that can come from surgery. Your child’s doctor will not consider epilepsy surgery until they know that other treatments have not worked.

When epilepsy medicines to control seizures (antiepileptic medicines) and other treatments do not work, epilepsy surgery may be the best option to control seizures. Your child’s doctor will help you find out if this is a good treatment for your child or not.

Should my child get epilepsy surgery?
Your child’s doctor will not consider your child for surgery unless they have already been on at least 2 antiepileptic medicines that have not worked to control seizures. Epilepsy surgery is a good treatment only if many other options have not worked well for your child. It is a treatment that works best for seizures that start from certain areas of the brain, so your child’s doctor will need to do tests to see what kinds of seizures your child has. Surgery may be a good choice for children who:

- Have epileptic seizures that are not helped by 2 or more different antiepileptic medicines
- Have seizures that always start in one part of the brain
- Have seizures in a part of the brain that can be taken out without damage to the areas of the brain that control important functions like sight, speech, memory or movement
- Have brain tumors or other growths in the brain that cause seizures

It is very important to talk with your child’s healthcare team and understand the possible harms and benefits before looking at this as an option for your child. Your child’s healthcare team will work with you and your child to help you decide if surgery is the best choice.
What can I expect will happen next?

If your child’s doctor is considering epilepsy surgery as a treatment option, it is important that your child get an evaluation in a place that specializes in these surgeries. This means that you will need to get a referral from your child’s primary care doctor for a first appointment at the Epilepsy Clinic or for a pre-surgical evaluation in the hospital.

Most children come for an appointment at an epilepsy surgery center, or a large hospital that does epilepsy surgeries. Here, your child will meet with a doctor who works with people who have epilepsy, or an epileptologist (ep-uh-lep-TAL-uh-jist) for an evaluation.

Deciding on epilepsy surgery as a treatment is a process. This appointment is just a first step in that process. At this appointment, the epileptologist might decide that epilepsy surgery is not right for your child. Or they might decide to order more tests to see if it might be a good treatment for your child. Either way, it will take some time before your child’s health care team can tell you for sure whether they think that epilepsy surgery is a good treatment for your child.

During this first appointment, your child’s epileptologist and healthcare team will:

• Ask about your child’s seizure history
• Go over results from tests like EEGs (electroencephalogram), brain MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging), neuropsychological evaluations and school assessments

Based on this appointment, your child’s healthcare team will decide if they should do more tests to see if epilepsy surgery is a good option for your child. The Neurology scheduler will work with you to schedule your child to be admitted to the hospital for a complete evaluation.

You might have a lot of questions about epilepsy surgery, and there will be time for you to talk to your child’s provider about these. Some of the questions you might want to ask are:

• Does my child have the kind of seizures that can be helped by an operation on the brain?
• Have we tried all other options to control seizures with antiepileptic medicines?
• Are there any other ways to control my child’s seizures, like a change in diet?

Epilepsy surgery is not the right option for all children with epilepsy, but it might be right for your child. Your child’s doctor and healthcare team are there to help you figure out what the best treatment is for your child.

If you have any questions, please call 206-987-2078 and choose option #2 for EEG Scheduling. Ask to speak with the epilepsy surgery coordinator.