

Epilepsy Surgery

Making a decision about treatment

Your child's healthcare team will try to control your child's seizures from epilepsy by using medicines. If these do not work, epilepsy surgery may be an option.

What is epilepsy surgery?

Most of the time, doctors treat epilepsy with a type of medicine called anti-seizure medicines. However, for a small amount of children (5% to 10%), surgery may be necessary. For these children, surgery can help reduce how often seizures happen (frequency) and make the seizures less strong (severity), and sometime stop the seizures all together.

There are other options to discuss with your child's healthcare team to control seizures. Epilepsy surgery is 1 of these treatment options.

There are different kinds of epilepsy surgeries:

- The surgeon may cut out the part of your child's brain where seizures start.
- The surgeon may cut the connections between parts of your child's brain.
- The surgeon may implant a device called a Vagus Nerve Stimulator. In this procedure, the surgeon does not cut any part of your child's brain.

When anti-seizure medicines and other treatments do not work, epilepsy surgery may be the best option to control seizures.

Should my child get epilepsy surgery?

Epilepsy surgery is a good treatment only if other options have not worked 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 do tests to see what kind of seizures your child has. Surgery may be a good choice for your child if they:

- Have tried 2 or more different anti-seizure medicines without success
- Have seizures that always start in the same 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

Talk with your child's healthcare team to understand the possible risks and benefits of surgery for your child.

1 of 2

To Learn More

- Neurology 206-987-2078
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.



What will happen next?

Usually, the first step is an evaluation with a doctor who works with people who have epilepsy, or an epileptologist. At this appointment, the doctor will:

- Ask about your child's seizure history.
- Review your child's past medicines, diets and other treatments.
- Go over results from tests like EEGs (electroencephalogram), brain MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging) and neuropsychological evaluations.

Your child's doctor may recommend that surgery is not right for your child, or that more tests are needed. Either way, it will take some time before your child's health care team can tell you if epilepsy surgery is recommended as a good treatment for your child.

There will be time for you to talk to your child's doctor about epilepsy surgery. Some of the questions you might want to ask are:

- Does my child have the kind of seizures that can be helped by surgery?
- Have we tried all other options to control seizures with medicine?
- Are there 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. Your child's epilepsy healthcare team are there to help you figure out the best treatment for your child.
