

Antiepileptic Drugs

Epilepsy, also known as seizure disorder, is a disease caused by abnormal activities of the brain cells. At the onset, there is a fit of muscle convulsions all over the body and temporary loss of consciousness. Patients suffer from irregular seizures, with a recurrent and temporary pattern in most cases. The disease has numerous causes, including hereditary factors and brain injury.

Antiepileptic drugs are medicines for seizure control. Regular medication can suppress epileptic seizures so that the patient can lead a normal life. Different types of epilepsy require different antiepileptic drugs. The doctor will prescribe the appropriate drugs according to the patient's condition. Some patients may be required to take several types of drugs.

Drugs Commonly Used

1. Phenobarbitone

It can effectively control various types of epilepsy by suppressing the central nervous system and producing a sedative effect.

2. Phenytoin

It has a lesser sedative effect and is often used with phenobarbitone to treat various types of epilepsy. It can also be used to prevent seizures caused by brain surgery or head injury.

3. Valproic acid

A relatively new antiepileptic drug that can be absorbed rapidly by the intestines. It works on various types of epilepsy.

Advice on Medication

1. The patient has to take the prescribed dose at fixed intervals on a long-term basis to reduce relapses and to control the conditions. Ineffective control is a sign to seek medical diagnosis and the doctor would increase the dose according to the patient's conditions. Do not change the dosage arbitrarily. Make sure that the stock of drugs is sufficient to last until your next medical appointment.
2. If you miss a dose, take it as soon as possible unless it is almost time for the next scheduled dose. In that case, skip the missed dose and take the next dose as directed. Do not take double doses.
3. Some patients may suffer from abdominal pain after medication. Such reaction

could be avoided by taking the drugs after meals.

Life Adaptations

Patients with proper control of his/her conditions by medication are basically no different from ordinary people. Epilepsy is not infectious and patients of this disease can lead a normal life like everyone else.

Patients should pay special attention to the following in their daily lives:

1. Patients do not need a restricted diet or extra vitamins but they should stay away from alcohol during medication.
2. Some jobs and sports activities may pose danger to patients whose conditions are not properly controlled. If they have to drive, they should be examined and certified by the doctor beforehand that they are safe to do so. In other words, prior consultation with the doctor is required.
3. Some antiepileptic drugs interfere with other drugs to give adverse effects. Consult your doctor before taking other drugs.
4. Women suffering from epilepsy should consult a doctor if they want to get pregnant.
5. Patients should carry with them drug records and identification cards which serve as reference to health care professionals for first-aid treatment in case of emergency.
6. In case of seizure, it is of utmost importance to keep the patient's airway clear. Family members should not force open the patient's mouth if there is no urgent need to do so.

Storage of the Drugs

The drugs should be stored in a dry and cool place. They do not need to be refrigerated unless otherwise stated on the labels. Oral drugs should be stored properly to avoid accidents of mistaken consumption by children.