



## Juvenile Myoclonic Epilepsy

### What Is Juvenile Myoclonic Epilepsy?

Patients with juvenile myoclonic epilepsy have myoclonic, absence and generalized tonic-clonic seizures with onset during adolescence.

Seizures are usually controlled by antiseizure medication but it is a lifelong condition, and most patients will need medication for several years.

### What Are the Signs & Symptoms of a Juvenile Myoclonic Seizure?

Different types of seizures can happen in juvenile myoclonic epilepsy.

#### Myoclonic Seizures

In a myoclonic seizure, a child:

- Has brief muscle twitches or jerks in the upper arms, shoulders, or neck
- Usually is awake and can think clearly during and right after the seizure

#### Absence Seizures

An absence seizure starts suddenly in the middle of activity and ends abruptly. During the seizure, a child:

- Blanks out or has staring spells that last 5-20 seconds
- May flutter their eyes or look upward
- Is unaware of what is going on during the seizure
- Returns to normal activity and won't remember having the seizure after it's over
- Has lip-smacking, chewing movements

#### Tonic-Clonic Seizures

In this type of seizure, a child:

- Has convulsions, or rigid muscles and rhythmic body jerks
- Rolls the eyes back
- Cries out
- May pee or poop
- Can't respond during seizure
- Is confused and sleepy after the seizure

Seizures in juvenile myoclonic epilepsy typically happen within 30 minutes of waking up in the morning or after a nap. They're more likely to happen when someone is tired, stressed, or didn't get enough sleep.

### **What Causes Juvenile Myoclonic Epilepsy?**

The cause of juvenile myoclonic epilepsy isn't known, but it tends to run in families. Genetic mutations have been associated with the condition.

### **How Is Juvenile Myoclonic Epilepsy Diagnosed?**

If your child had a seizure, the doctor probably will want you to see a pediatric neurologist. The neurologist will ask questions about what happened during the seizure, do an exam, and order an EEG.

### **How Is Juvenile Myoclonic Epilepsy Treated?**

Seizures are usually well-controlled with medication, which many people will need to take for life.

### **How Can Parents Help?**

To help your child live better with epilepsy, be sure they follow the neurologist's recommendations about:

- Taking any medicines
- Avoiding triggers (such as excessive stress, lack of sleep, blinking lights, drinking alcohol, some types of medicines)
- Taking precautions while swimming or bathing
- Knowing whether it's okay for your teen to drive
- Knowing whether your child should wear a medical ID bracelet

To keep your child safe during a seizure, make sure that other adults and caregivers (family members, babysitters, teachers, coaches, etc.) know what to do. Your doctor may prescribe an emergency medicine to give if your child has a long seizure or many seizures in a short amount of time. Be sure to ask your doctor about a seizure rescue plan for your child.

Juvenile myoclonic epilepsy is a lifelong condition. But many kids go on to live a normal life with a few extra steps taken to keep them safe.

### **What Else Should I Know?**

If your child has epilepsy, reassure them that they're not alone. Your doctor and the care team can answer questions and offer support. They also might be able to recommend a local support group. Online organizations can help too, such as:

- [Epilepsy Foundation](#)
- [CDC – Managing Epilepsy](#)