



Self-Limited Epilepsy with Autonomic Seizures (Panayiotopoulos Syndrome)

What Is Self-Limited Epilepsy with Autonomic Seizures?

Kids with self-limited epilepsy with autonomic seizures have seizures that involve unresponsiveness, eye deviation, and vomiting. Seizures start between 1- and 14-years-old (most frequently between 3- and 6-years-old). They typically happen during sleep. Most patients have only a few seizures and almost always stop having it after a year or two. Some children can develop self-limited epilepsy with centrotemporal spikes, but the prognosis is also favorable.

What Happens During Self-Limited Epilepsy with Autonomic Seizures?

The seizures in self-limited epilepsy with autonomic seizures are focal seizures. This means that they affect only one side of the brain at a time.

The seizures usually last less than several minutes. During one, a child will have:

- Unresponsiveness
- Eye deviation
- Retching or vomiting
- Abdominal pain
- Palor

What Causes Self-Limited Epilepsy with Autonomic Seizures?

Doctors don't know what causes self-limited epilepsy with autonomic seizures. It is probably genetic, and some kids may have a relative who has febrile seizures or epilepsy.

How Is Self-Limited Epilepsy with Autonomic Seizures Diagnosed?

Doctors diagnose the condition based on the description of the seizures, their timing, the child's age and development, and results from an EEG.

Kids who've had a seizure might need to see a pediatric neurologist (a doctor who treats brain, spine, and nervous system problems). Other tests done can include:

- VEEG, or video electroencephalography (EEG with video recording)
- MRI

How Is Self-Limited Epilepsy with Autonomic Seizures Treated?

Not all children with self-limited epilepsy with autonomic seizures need treatment. Those who have recurrent seizures generally need to take medicine to stop them. Many pediatric neurologists use a low-dose antiseizure medicine. If a child hasn't had a seizure in more than 2 years, the neurologist will do an EEG to see when and if the child can stop taking the medicine. Most children outgrow self-limited epilepsy with autonomic seizures around the teen years.

How Can Parents Help?

If your child takes medicine, make sure you give it exactly as directed. You can also help your child avoid known seizure triggers such as lack of sleep.

No special care is needed during a typical seizure. But because it can be prolonged (more than five minutes) make sure that you and other adults and caregivers (family members, babysitters, teachers, coaches, etc.) know what to do if it happens. 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.

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](#)