

## The Levels of Epilepsy Care

**Primary Care:** Typically, epilepsy care starts with an evaluation at an emergency room or a primary care physician's office. This is considered the first level of epilepsy care. For many patients the first anti-epileptic medication tried will effectively control seizures without causing side-effects. If seizure control is obtained, no further specialized epilepsy evaluation may be needed.

**Neurologist:** If seizures persist and cannot be brought under control by the primary care provider within 3 months, further neurologic intervention is appropriate with a general neurologist. A neurologist is a physician that specializes in diseases of the brain and central nervous system. Once seizures are under control, care can be transferred back to the primary care provider.

**Epileptologists and Specialized Epilepsy Centers:** Patients who are not responding to standard medical therapy who have either persistent seizures or side effects should be referred to an epilepsy specialist, known as an epileptologist or to a specialized center. Epilepsy centers provide a comprehensive team approach to the diagnosis and treatment of epilepsy. A patient's team will typically include epileptologists (neurologists with special expertise in treating seizures), neurosurgeons, neuropsychologists, nurse specialists, EEG technologists, social workers and others with special training and experience in epilepsy treatment. Their goal is to control or at least reduce the frequency of seizures and side effects for patients.

### Who should be seen at an epilepsy center?

The National Association of Epilepsy Centers (NAEC) recommends that patients whose seizures are not fully controlled after treatment for one year be referred to a specialized epilepsy center. In addition, patients may benefit from the advanced care provided by epilepsy centers if they:

- Continue to have seizures despite treatment with two different seizure medications
- Take multiple seizure medications daily
- Have unacceptable side effects
- Need advanced testing to confirm the diagnosis of epilepsy or find another cause for symptoms
- Need a team approach to epilepsy and other medical conditions such as depression, learning disabilities, anxiety, or problems with memory or thinking
- Want to learn about non-medication treatments for seizures - epilepsy surgery, the ketogenic diet, vagus nerve stimulator, and other new therapies
- Have seizures secondary to genetic disorders or other rare diseases
- Are pregnant or want to learn more about effects of epilepsy and seizure medications on pregnancy and the developing baby
- Are interested in participating in clinical trials of new experimental medical or device treatments for seizures

**To Find an Epilepsy Center Near You – [www.naec-epilepsy.org](http://www.naec-epilepsy.org)**