



Factsheet: Temporal Lobe Epilepsy

What is it?

The temporal lobe is a part of your front brain. Seizure activity in this area of the brain is called temporal lobe epilepsy. People can have temporal lobe seizures as well as other kinds of seizures. Temporal lobe epilepsy (TLE) can be difficult to diagnose because of vague symptoms. An aura may actually be a temporal lobe seizure. Some of the symptoms can be confused with ways of behaving or other physical problems.

This is because the temporal lobe is responsible for many functions including:

- Feelings (such as anger, fear and déjà vu)
- Hearing
- Speech and language
- Reading
- Bowel function

Some symptoms of temporal lobe seizures might include:

- Feeling angry, scared or disoriented
- A sense of having been here before or disorientation
- Hallucinations of voices, people, music, smells or tastes
- Being temporarily unable to speak normally
- Being temporarily unable to read
- Feeling butterflies in their stomach or nausea
- Meaningless repetitive movements like lip-smacking or pulling at clothes. These are called automatisms.

Temporal lobe epilepsy (TLE) and mood

So someone may experience unusual feelings of anger or anxiety and this may actually be a seizure in the temporal lobe. If it is a seizure then they will not be in control over those feelings. This can be difficult for other people to understand.

The effect of the temporal lobe on feelings means that people with TLE may have low moods before, during or after a seizure. It may seem like they are depressed but it can often be caused by seizure activity.

It is important to understand when a change in mood comes from seizure activity and when it is how the person is really feeling. This is particularly difficult to determine for children or people with a learning difficulty. They may not be able to tell others what is happening for them.

Temporal lobe epilepsy (TLE) and memory

People with TLE often experience difficulties with their memory. This is because the temporal lobe is the place where we store new memories.

Low mood can also affect our memory. Research shows that when people are depressed or anxious they can become distracted and unable to focus.

We have a leaflet explaining more about memory and epilepsy. It contains many ideas to help improve your memory. Call our helpline on 0808 800 2200 for details.

Temporal lobe epilepsy (TLE) and safety

TLE is a kind of partial seizure. Partial seizures affect only part of the brain. Sometimes a temporal lobe seizure can become a generalised tonic clonic seizure. It is possible to have long or repeated seizures (status epilepticus) in TLE. It happens less than with other types of epilepsy. Status epilepticus is a medical emergency where seizures last longer than 30 minutes and the person does not recover fully between each seizure.

Treatments for temporal lobe epilepsy (TLE)

Partial seizures affect only part of the brain. TLE can be difficult to diagnose because the seizures may not show up on an EEG. TLE is usually treated with anti-epileptic medication (AEDs) like other types of epilepsy. Where there is a clear seizure focal point and the person does not have any generalised seizures, brain surgery can be used to remove the affected part.

For more help and information

Call our helpline 0808 800 2200, text 07786 209 501

Or email us at enquiries@epilepsyscotland.org.uk