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# Advances in diagnosis and treatment to meet the needs of persons with epilepsy

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# The first seizure

- ✓ What happens to an adult patient following admission to St Luke's Hospital after having his first Epileptic fit.
- ✓ Fits can occur at any age and equally in both sexes.
- ✓ The most important thing is to try and find a cause for the fit.



# Diagnostic Tests

- ✓ Tests are carried out to identify a possible cause for the fit.
  - Very often no cause for the fit is found.
  - This is true for about 90% of all cases.

The following tests are routinely carried out within the first 24-48 hours.

- ✓ Blood tests.
- ✓ ECG
- ✓ CT Scan
- ✓ EEG
- ✓ MRI Scan.



## Treatment

- ✓ If all tests are normal no treatment is usually given.

The patient is however advised,

- ✓ Not to drive.
- ✓ To avoid heights.
- ✓ Not to swim alone.
- ✓ To have a shower, rather than a bath.



## Treatment is started if

- ✓ There is any significant abnormality in the tests.
- ✓ The patient has had a second fit.
- ✓ The choice of treatment is sometimes dictated by the results of the EEG.



# Antiepileptic Medicines

There are a number of anticonvulsant agents

- ✓ Phenytoin (Epanutin)
- ✓ Carbamazepine (Tegretol)
- ✓ Sodium Valproate (Epilim)
- ✓ Lamotrigine (Lamictal)
- ✓ Topiramate (Topamax)



# Pregnancy and epilepsy.

- ✓ It is safer for pregnant women to have anticonvulsants rather than risk having recurrent fits during pregnancy.
- ✓ Folic acid is thought to reduce the risks of malformations in the baby.



## Blood tests

- ✓ Blood tests are usually necessary when phenytoin is used.
- ✓ For the other drugs, blood levels are usually carried out to confirm that the patient is taking the medication prescribed.





# Side Effects

- ✓ All tablets have side effects, and have to be used carefully
- ✓ Skin reactions are the most frequent
- ✓ Abnormal liver functions are also frequent
- ✓ Should medication be stopped?



# New developments

- ✓ Video telemetry
- ✓ Digital EEG
- ✓ New drugs