

EPILEPSY



As long as there have been men and women on earth there have been those with epilepsy.

The word 'epilepsy' comes from the greek word meaning 'take hold of'. In ancient times it used to be called the 'falling sickness'. In those days this was a good description because people thought that there was only one type of seizure - the person fell to the ground had convulsions. Today we call them tonic clonic seizures.

Today, however, we know more about epilepsy and have learned that there are many different types of seizure. The term 'falling sickness' is no longer used.

Epilepsy is not a disease - it is just a sign that part of the brain is not working normally. When it is working normally it gives off tiny amounts of well organised electricity. Electricity pylons carry electricity around the country in a well organised way, just like in the brain when everything is working well. When somebody is having a seizure, however, the electricity becomes very disorganised - a bit like flashes of lightening during a thunderstorm. The type of seizure a person is having depends on the place in the brain where the 'storm' happens.

Epilepsy is a condition where a person has a series of seizures. A single 'one off' seizure is not epilepsy - at least two or three seizures must have happened before a doctor will label the condition as epilepsy. A great many people will have a single seizure during a lifetime but this is not epilepsy.

It is thought that at least one person in every 103 has got epilepsy. This means that in Britain alone there are at least 150,000 children with epilepsy, more than enough to fill a large football stadium like Everton's Goodison Park, shown here, 3 times over.

Every day you are bound come across at least one person who has epilepsy. Most schools have more than one pupil with the condition. It is very common, so it is hard to know why so many people know so little about it