

Mersey Region
Epilepsy Association

The Detective Story



Story by Peter Rogan
Illustrated by Laura Burns



Nobody's perfect. We are all different in one way or another.

Some people are heavy, some are tall and some are short. Lots of people have to wear glasses and some can't hear very well. Others have to get around using a wheelchair.

Just think of those who no longer have their own teeth any more, or older people who cannot walk as fast as they used to.

Yes, all of us would sometimes like things about ourselves to be different, but it's the differences that make us who we are.





This is Daisy!

She has a kind of difference too, but just by looking at there you can't tell what that difference is.

Sometimes she falls on the ground, gets stiff all over and then shakes for a while. People call this a SEIZURE. That's when you can see her difference. She has something called EPILEPSY.

Daisy wanted to know more about her epilepsy, so she decided to become a detective.



This story tells what she found out.



Daisy started with the word **'EPILEPSY'**.

She looked up the word in the dictionary to see what it meant.

She found that it came from the Greek word meaning 'to be taken by surprise'.

The rest of the explanation was too hard to understand.

She knew that detectives asked people lots of questions...



So she started with her Mum and Dad. After all, they knew just about everything!

However, Mum and Dad didn't know much about epilepsy, so she asked them to come along and help her to solve the mystery.

They agreed and the first thing they did was to search the internet to find out if epilepsy was a rare or common condition.

It didn't take them long to find out that while there have been people on earth there have been those with epilepsy.

That is still the case, no matter what the colour of their skin is, whether they are young or old, men or women.



Almost 1 in every 100 people are affected which means that worldwide there are 60 million people living with epilepsy. That's an awful lot of people!



They realised that epilepsy can affect anyone at any time.

Nobody can be sure to go through life without the chance of getting epilepsy, so it is a good thing for everybody to learn as much about it as they can.

When they closed down the computer they had no doubt that epilepsy is a common condition and that Daisy was not alone in having it but one of many other people spread around the world.



Daisy was very curious about what a seizure looked like.

Of course, she couldn't see herself having one but her friends could.

So she asked them to tell her what one was like.

“Well, you fall over”, they said. “You become unconscious and then become stiff”.



“After a few seconds, you start shaking. When you stop shaking you wake up just as if you had been asleep, but sometimes you seem to be very tired and mixed-up.”

“Well now!” said Daisy, “that’s why I have to rest afterwards”.



The next thing Daisy asked was,
“What makes me fall over and shake?”

She discovered that seizures come from the brain and that everybody’s brain makes a little bit of electricity.



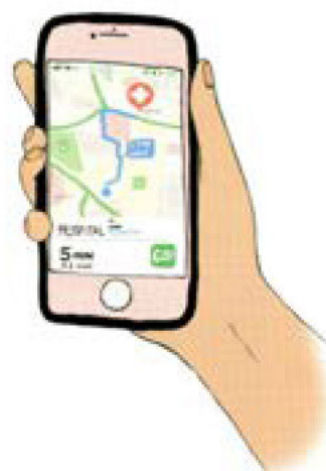
When a seizure takes place in the brain the electrical signals get bigger for a few seconds and then get out of control.

It’s rather like what happens in nature when a thunder storm takes place and the sky is full of lightning.

Daisy worked it out that it is the extra bit of electricity made in the brain that caused her body to act differently, making her fall to the ground and shake out of control. It all started to make sense.

These discoveries helped her to understand why she had tests on her head when she went to the hospital.

So off to the hospital they went to find out more about the tests she had been having.



Daisy asked the lady who works the test machine, “Why do you fix all those wires to people’s heads?”

The lady told her, “It’s a way to find out about the electricity in your brain. Once the wires are on your head the machine is able to make a pattern to help us know what is going on”.



“The pattern is called an **ELECTROENCEPHALOGRAPH** but we cut that short and call it an **EEG**.”

It means (Electro) electrical patterns (Encephalo) of the brain (Graph) seen to be drawn on the screen”.



“What good is that?”, asked Daisy.

“Sometimes people with epilepsy show different patterns depending on their type of epilepsy, like the two different patterns I am showing you on the screen”, the lady explained.

These patterns help the doctor to find out what kind of epilepsy the person has and how best to treat it.

Now Daisy knew why she had to have an EEG test.



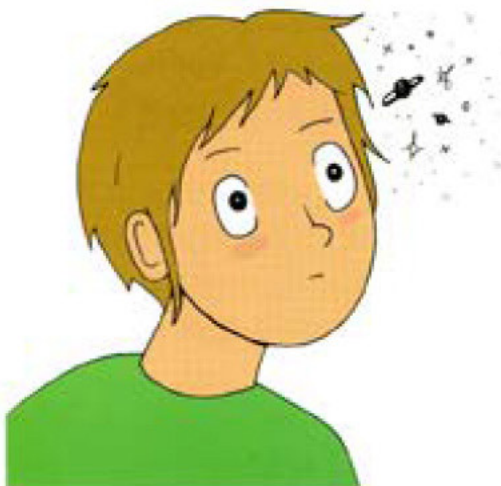
The Doctor was the next to be questioned. Daisy wanted to know if everybody with epilepsy had the same type of seizure.

“Oh no”, the Doctor told her, “both children and grown ups with epilepsy can have different types of seizure. I will tell you about some of the more common ones”.

“The type of seizure you have, when you fall to the ground, go stiff and then shake is called a **tonic clonic seizure**. It usually lasts for a few minutes. Because you are unconscious you feel no pain and cannot remember what happened to you. The seizure usually lasts no longer than a few minutes”.



“There are also seizures called ‘**absences**’ that are most common in childhood. The boy or girl becomes unconscious but does not fall to the floor and simply stares into space with a completely blank look on the face. These seizures only last for a very short time but can happen very frequently”.



Both of these types of seizure are as a result of the extra amounts of electricity across the whole brain and are known as **Generalised Seizures**.



Can just one part of the brain cause a seizure?”, asked Daisy.

“Yes, when this happens the seizure is called a partial seizure and there are two kinds of this type of seizure. There is a **simple partial seizure** where the person may get a tingling feeling or movements in one part of the body like a hand, or a **complex partial seizure** when the extra electrical energy spreads across a larger area of the brain and cause the person to become very confused and have strange feelings.”

“What sort of strange feelings?”, asked Daisy.

“Some may hear things or smell things that are not really there or maybe get funny feelings in their tummies that rise up into their throats”.

“Others start fumbling with their clothes or start smacking their lips, while others feel that they are in a strange situation that they have felt before”.

“Can someone with epilepsy have more than one type of seizure?” asked Daisy’s Dad.

“Yes, this can happen”, was the reply from the doctor.



“Do people with epilepsy have to take their medicine all the time?” asked Mum.

“Absolutely”, said the Doctor. “They must try very hard to remember to keep taking it until they are told to do anything else by a doctor”.



Dad joined in to ask if Daisy could play her favourite sports and games.

“Of course she can!”, was the definite reply from the Doctor.

“Children with epilepsy can join in all games”.

“What about swimming?” Daisy asked.

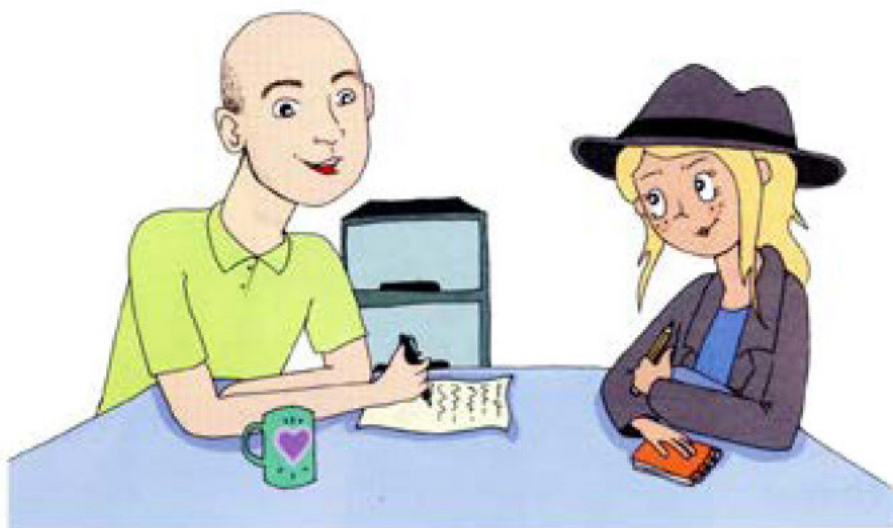
“All children, whether they have epilepsy or not, should learn to swim. They should always make sure to have someone with them as swimming alone can be dangerous”



“Is there anything I should be careful of?”, asked Daisy.

“Yes, it’s OK to ride your bike but only where there is no heavy traffic but climbing trees or any high objects is not a good idea at all” was the reply.

Daisy wanted to know about First Aid for a tonic clonic seizure so she asked the Epilepsy Specialist Nurse to help her out on this one.



He told her that there were a few simple rules to follow. He wrote them down so that Daisy could show them to her friends and relations.



After at their enquiries the three detectives made their way home. They hadn't solved everything and knew that different problems would crop up but they would be solved as she grew older.

She was, however, much happier now and felt a lot better because she knew more about epilepsy than she did before she set out on her detective work.



The case was closed for the time being and Daisy, with her family and friends, could go on living in a normal way, having lots of fun.



