

Teens with epilepsy face higher odds for eating disorders

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Teenagers with epilepsy are more likely to have an eating disorder than those not suffering from the brain disease, a new study shows.

About 8.4% of children ages 10 to 19 treated at a Boston epilepsy clinic had eating disorders, three times the national average of 2.7% of [teens](#) with an [eating disorder](#), researchers found.

"Adolescents with epilepsy may feel a [loss of control](#) because they don't know when they'll have a seizure," said lead researcher [Dr. Itay Tokatly Latzer](#), an epilepsy fellow at Boston Children's Hospital.

"Controlling what they eat or don't eat can presumably make them feel they have regained some control," Tokatly Latzer added in a hospital news release. "This is one of the ways epilepsy may lead to eating disorders, in people who have a biological or psychological predisposition to develop eating disorders."

For the study, Tokatly Latzer and colleagues analyzed data on 1,740 teens treated at least once at Boston Children's Epilepsy Center for any conditions involving seizures between 2013 and 2022. None of the teens had an intellectual disability or autism.

Of those children, 146 were diagnosed with an eating disorder.

During the 10-year-period, the number of teens treated at the center who had eating disorders increased annually, rising from 12 in 2013 to 22 in 2022.

Anorexia was more common than either bulimia or binge eating among teens with epilepsy and an eating disorder.

Researchers found that teens with epilepsy were more likely to have an eating disorder if they had a lower BMI or suffered from a particular type of seizure called psychogenic non-epileptic seizures.

They also were more likely to have depression, anxiety, [suicidal thoughts](#)

or a history of sexual abuse.

Adolescents with eating disorders began suffering seizures at a younger age than those without an eating disorder, results show.

The findings were presented Friday at the American Epilepsy Society's annual meeting in Orlando, Fla. Results presented at medical meetings should be considered preliminary until they're published in a peer-reviewed journal.

Health professionals at epilepsy clinics need to be aware of the higher risk of eating disorders in the [adolescents](#) they treat, Tokatly Latzer said. He added that those who have eating disorders should be referred for treatment of the disorder.

"This research is especially important because it highlights a psychiatric condition that may be associated with adolescents with [epilepsy](#) and can lead to a failure to meet [nutritional needs](#) and severe inability to carry out many daily life functions," Tokatly Latzer added.

More information: The Cleveland Clinic has more on [epilepsy](#).

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