



Brainwave The Irish Epilepsy Association
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Epilepsy Surgery

Who can be helped by epilepsy surgery?

Some people's epilepsy is caused by a specific structural problem in part or parts of the brain. This may have resulted from some form of head injury, occurring either at birth or in later life, or from cerebral infection, for example. It is also possible that the brain did not develop properly or there is some form of scarring, lesion or a birthmark on the brain which the person was born with. Having epilepsy surgery, which put very simply, means removing the abnormal or damaged part of the brain, may help some of these.

This is major brain surgery and is not undertaken lightly.

Over 70% of people who have epilepsy surgery become completely seizure free. To find out whether someone is suitable for this type of surgery a number of things will need to be taken into account by the consultant or specialist.

Surgery will be considered if:

The person has no other medical problem, which would make them unsuitable for this type of surgery.

Anti - epileptic drug treatment has been tried but proved unsuccessful.

The seizures can be seen to be arising from one localised area of the brain.

The person's ability to function normally would not be affected by removing this part of the brain.

The irregular part of the brain is accessible to the surgeon and can be removed without causing further damage to any further part of the brain.

The areas of the brain responsible for speech, sight, movement or hearing are not close to the part of the brain to be removed.

The person is thought to have a very good chance of becoming seizure free after surgery.

To answer some of these questions a number of tests will need to be carried out, these may include: MRI scans, video telemetry and psychological tests. The results of these are vital in giving the consultant the information needed to assess the suitability for surgery of each person.

To find out more about the possibility of epilepsy surgery, you should discuss this with your GP or specialist who, if it is felt to be appropriate, may refer you to a centre offering this treatment for detailed evaluation.