

Epilepsy in Canada



Epilepsy is a brain disorder characterized by recurrent seizures. Seizures are caused by abnormal bursts of electrical activity in the brain. Conditions that damage the brain (e.g., head trauma, tumors, infections, stroke, Alzheimer disease), autoimmune conditions and genetics play a role in the development of epilepsy. However, in some cases, no specific cause can be identified.

If uncontrolled, epilepsy results in recurrent seizures that vary in:¹



FREQUENCY:

1 per year to several per day



FORM:

different symptoms and signs (e.g., staring blankly, loss of awareness, convulsions)



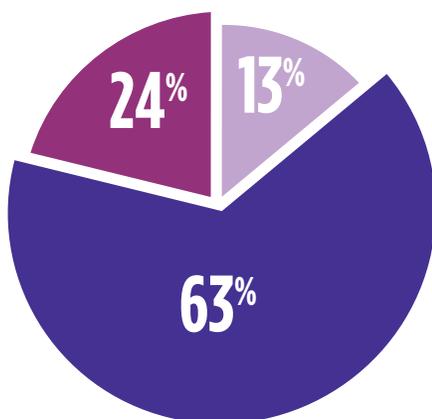
DURATION:

a few seconds to a few minutes

Data (fiscal year 2021–2022)* show that:

- ▶ Almost **1 out of 100** Canadians live with epilepsy.
- ▶ This proportion is similar among both sexes.

Canadians of all ages live with epilepsy. Of them:

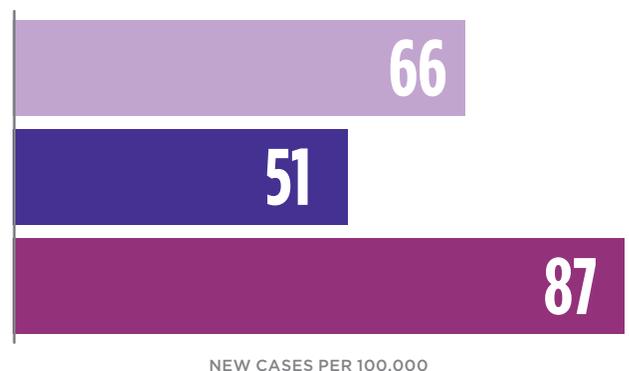


 CHILDREN AND YOUTH (1-19)

 ADULTS (20-64)

 OLDER ADULTS (65+)

Epilepsy can occur at any age. However, new cases are more frequent among younger and older Canadians.



Taking into account the aging of the population over time, between 2011–2012 and 2021–2022*, the proportion of Canadians living with epilepsy increased on average by **2% per year** (from 0.78% to 0.95%).

Canadians living with epilepsy can experience different health and social consequences (e.g., higher risk of depression and injuries, inability to drive or to work). With the right care (e.g., medications, dietary therapy or surgery), it is possible to manage epilepsy and limit or even prevent seizures.²

LEARN MORE ABOUT EPILEPSY:

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MORE Epilepsy Canada; Canadian Epilepsy Alliance; Canadian League Against Epilepsy

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REFERENCES AND NOTES:

* Canadian Chronic Disease Surveillance System (CCDSS) 2023. Epilepsy (age 1+). Quebec and Northwest Territories data were not available. New Brunswick and Saskatchewan data were not available for 2021–2022. Many CCDSS measures were influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021–2022 and should be interpreted with caution.

1 Fisher RS, Acevedo C, Arzimanoglou A, Bogacz A, Cross JH, Elger CE, Engel Jr J, Forsgren L, French JA, Glynn M, Hesdorffer DC. ILAE official report: a practical clinical definition of epilepsy. *Epilepsia*. 2014 Apr [cited 2021 July 05];55(4):475–82. Available from: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/epi.12550>.

2 World Health Organization. Epilepsy: a public health imperative. World Health Organization; 2019 [cited 2021 July 05]. Available from: <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/325293/9789241515931-eng.pdf>.

