

Electroclinical markers to differentiate between focal and generalized epilepsies

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Focal vs Generalized Epilepsies

Learning points

- Clinical history and examination are the most important tools to distinguish focal vs generalized epilepsies
- EEG should be interpreted in a clinical context
- Young children may not be able to report sensory features
- Co-morbidities may compound ictal events
- Keep an open mind and continually re-evaluate history and event semiology

	Focal Epilepsies	Generalised Epilepsies
Classification	Localized brain networks	Bilateral brain networks
Seizure	Focal activity	Generalized involvement
History	Aware at event onset \pm throughout event	Loss of awareness
Clinical	Focal neurology anatomically correlates with semiology	Bilateral neurological involvement
EEG	Focal discharges \pm bilateral synchrony	Generalized discharges
Neuroimaging	Normal or focal localized pathology	Normal or diffuse brain involvement
Genetics	Rare	Common
Development	Not commonly affected	May be affected based on etiology and epilepsy syndrome