Early Onset Occipital Epilepsy (Panayiotopoulos Syndrome)

This syndrome typically emerges between the ages of 3 – 10 years. Seizures associated with this syndrome generally start as focal seizures that then spreads to a generalised seizure. Children experiencing a seizure look pale, complain of feeling sick and often vomit. Some children will show eye deviation (eyes turn to one side), pupils will become very large (dilated), the face becomes flushed, and sweating and drooling from the mouth. Seizures tend to occur within an hour after falling asleep. Seizures tend to be prolonged, sometimes lasting for 20 to 60 minutes.

Some children diagnosed with Panayiotopoulos syndrome may have very infrequent seizures, in which case medication may not be required. For those with more frequent seizures, anti-epileptic drugs may be prescribed. Some children who experience prolonged seizures may require emergency medical treatment, and the family may also be prescribed with emergency medication.

The prognosis for children with this syndrome is good. Nearly all children will stop having seizures within 2 – 3 years after the first seizure, and it is unlikely that seizures will continue into, or re-start, in adult life.

For more information about Panayiotopoulos syndrome visit the Epilepsy Foundation USA