

Do you always feel tired?

Have you:

- *Had the sudden urge to sleep during the day even though you're getting enough sleep at night?*
- *Fallen asleep while working, eating, or talking to someone?*
- *Felt alert after a brief nap but then the alertness quickly changes to sleepiness?*

If you experience any of these situations you may have Narcolepsy.

Symptoms of Narcolepsy

Symptoms usually begin when patients are between 10 and 20 years old. The main symptom of narcolepsy is excessive daytime sleepiness.

Excessive Daytime Sleepiness: People with excessive daytime sleepiness are tired during the day even when they have had a full night's sleep. Sleepiness may occur during many different activities, including talking with others or driving. The sleepiness is difficult to prevent and may vary over the course of the day. After a brief nap, people will often feel alert, but the sleepiness usually returns after one or two hours.

Cataplexy: Cataplexy is muscle weakness that can range from barely noticeable to severe and is often triggered by strong emotions. When people who have narcolepsy with cataplexy become angry or start laughing, their cataplexy may show up as slight pressure on their eyelids, or it could be more serious and cause them to fall down.

Hallucinations: While falling asleep or waking up, people with narcolepsy may have intense, dream-like hallucinations.

Sleep Paralysis: People with sleep paralysis lose the ability to move and feel paralyzed when they are falling asleep or waking up.

What Causes Narcolepsy?

Narcolepsy runs in some families, but most cases are not genetic. Recent studies suggest that people with narcolepsy with cataplexy often are missing a protein called hypocretin.

How Long Will I Have Narcolepsy?

Narcolepsy is a lifelong condition. However, with the right treatment, most people can manage their narcolepsy well.



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Can I Drive If I Have Narcolepsy?

Driving when your Narcolepsy is untreated can be very dangerous. The laws about driving with Narcolepsy are different in each state.

In Georgia if a driver is charged with causing a sleep-related motor vehicle crash, (e.g., reckless driving), the charge would include that of distracted driving and whatever other violation that may have resulted from the occurrence. In the event of a death, the driver would be charged with 2nd degree vehicular homicide.

Studies show that people with untreated Narcolepsy are 10 times more likely to get into car accidents than people with treated narcolepsy.

How Do I Know If I Have Narcolepsy?

Many people do not know that they have narcolepsy. If you think that you may have this disorder, speak with your physician. He or she may refer you to a sleep specialist. There are tests that can help determine if you have narcolepsy.

Sleep Study

You may be referred to a sleep center for an overnight sleep study followed the next day by a daytime sleep study called a Multiple Sleep Latency Test, or MSLT. The MSLT is a test done in the sleep center where you take naps at set times during the day. Information is collected on how quickly you fall asleep during the naps.

Could I Have Another Sleep Disorder?

Many sleep disorders can cause people to be tired during the day. It may be difficult to determine if you have narcolepsy, another sleep disorder, or a combination of narcolepsy and other sleep disorders. For example, Idiopathic Hypersomnolism is very much like Narcolepsy.

Other sleep disorders that may cause excessive daytime sleepiness include:

- Circadian Rhythm Sleep Disorders
- Restless Leg Syndrome
- Obstructive Sleep Apnea
- Idiopathic Hypersomnolism

How Is Narcolepsy Treated?

Medication is often used to treat narcolepsy. Many people take stimulating medications that help them stay awake during the day. Some people take certain types of antidepressants to help with cataplexy. Changes in lifestyle can help make sure that you have the best schedule for controlling your narcolepsy.

If you think you may have narcolepsy or another sleep disorder, please talk with your physician health care provider.