

RESTLESS LEG SYNDROME



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Do any of these describe you?

- *I can't fall asleep because I have to move my legs.*
- *I wake up at night and it feels like my legs are on fire.*
- *When I try to go to sleep, I feel an itching in my legs. It goes away if I get up and walk around but returns when I lie down.*

If you have been experiencing any of the above, you may have restless leg syndrome (RLS).

What is RLS?

Restless Leg Syndrome or RLS, is a movement disorder. It happens when you feel an overwhelming urge to move your legs. You may also feel burning or itching inside your legs. This is quite different from the pain of a muscle cramp. RLS sensations appear most often in the calves of your legs. These uncomfortable feelings may stop for a short time if you walk around. Usually, these feelings are worse at night.

What Causes RLS?

Often, the causes of RLS are unknown. RLS may be hard to describe, but it is not a psychological or an emotional problem. RLS can be caused by or made worse by other health issues or medication.

Low iron levels can cause problems with brain cell communication that can lead to RLS. If you think your RLS is caused by low iron, do not take supplements on your own. Instead, talk with your health care provider.

Diabetes can damage blood vessels and nerves that affect leg muscles, causing RLS. Making sure your diabetes is well treated may help prevent or improve your RLS.

Pregnancy: Many women have RLS during their pregnancy. It usually goes away shortly after giving birth.

Medications that may cause RLS or make it worse include over-the-counter sleep aids, allergy medications, anti-nausea medications and some antidepressants.

Who Is At Risk for RLS?

Women are twice as likely over men to have RLS. Those who develop RLS usually do so after the age of 45. If you have a family member with RLS, you are more likely to develop

RLS before the age of 45.

How Do I Know If I Have RLS?

Your health care provider will ask you about your medical history. He or she can refer you to a sleep specialist if necessary. A sleep study can help rule out other sleep disorders and also help diagnose RLS by showing leg muscle activity throughout the night.

What Are The Consequences of Untreated RLS?

If left untreated, your RLS symptoms may become more frequent and severe over months or years. Sometimes people with RLS have difficulty sitting still for long periods of time. They may have problems on long car or plane rides.

People with RLS often get fewer hours of sleep than they need or have poor quality sleep.

There are many problems that can occur if you do not get enough sleep or quality sleep on a regular basis.

How Is RLS Treated?

The first step in treating RLS is to see if you have any other conditions that are related to the problem, such as Iron deficiency, Diabetes, Arthritis, or medications that may cause RLS. Detecting and treating these problems may sometimes relieve the symptoms of RLS.

RLS can also be improved by changes in behavior or treated with medication.

Behavioral changes to help RLS:

- Exercising
- Reducing stress
- Drinking less caffeine
- Not drinking alcohol
- Quitting smoking
- Massaging your legs

There are medications available to treat RLS. One, or a combination of medications may be necessary to treat the disorder. Medications may improve your symptoms for a period of time but then stop working as well as they initially did. It is important to stay in touch with your health care provider.